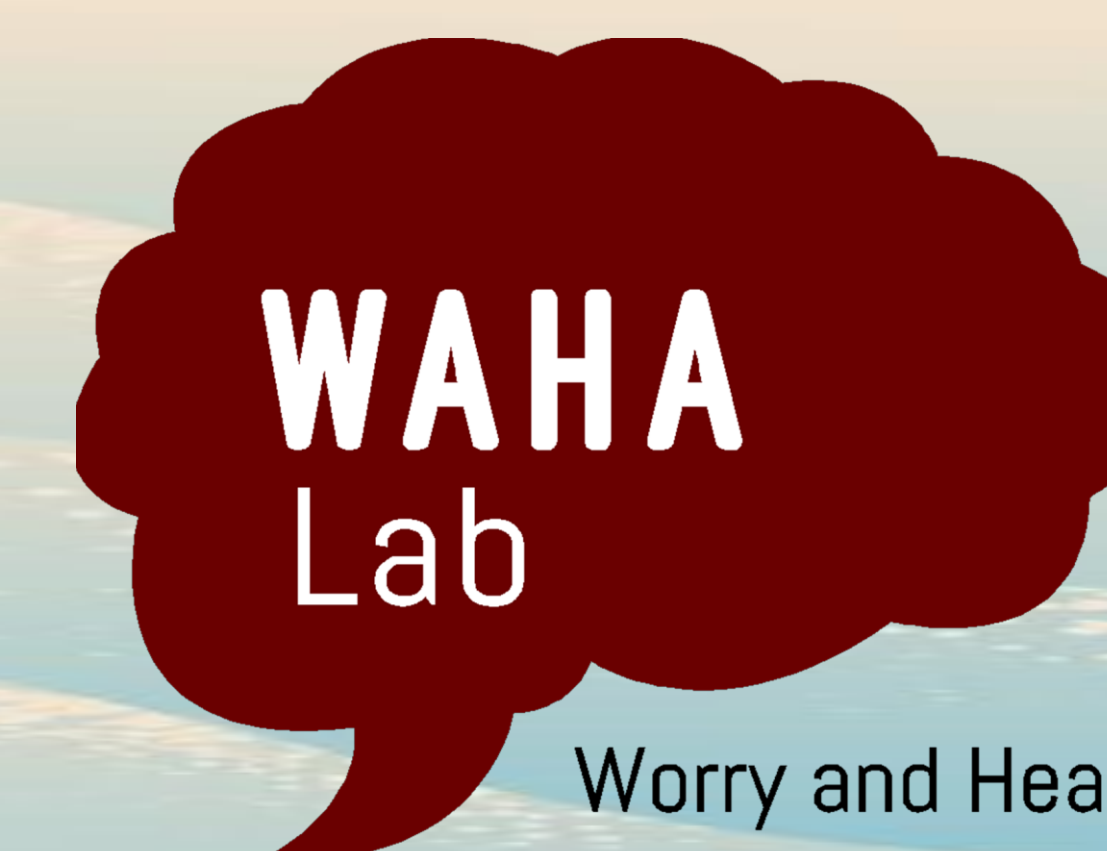




# Ugh! Don't Get Sick: Disgust Sensitivity Contributes to Health Anxiety

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## Introduction

**Health Anxiety:** Persistent and distressing anxiety about perceived threats to one's health

**Disgust:** A primary emotion of revulsion to off-putting stimuli

- Disgust Propensity: Ease or frequency of experiencing disgust
- Disgust Sensitivity: Strength of negative response to disgust
- Disgust has been consistently shown to be associated with HA, particularly during periods of heightened fears of contamination (Brady et al., 2014; Goetz et al., 2013; Olatunji, 2009)
- Previous studies of HA and disgust have not accounted for OCD and metacognitions about health, both of which are strongly associated with HA (Bailey & Wells, 2015; Bailer et al., 2016; Melli et al., 2016)

We examined if disgust propensity and sensitivity would be associated with health anxiety (HA) when controlling for obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and dysfunctional metacognitive beliefs about health, and hypothesized disgust would remain a unique predictor of HA

## Method

552 undergraduates completed online surveys

(*M*<sub>age</sub>= 20.9 years, 73.0% Female, 22.3% Male, 3.1% Non-binary)

**Short Health Anxiety Inventory**

(SHAI; Salkovskis et al., 2002)

**Obsessive Compulsive Inventory-Revised**

(OCI-R; Foa et al., 2002)

**Metacognitions Questionnaire-Health Anxiety**

(MCQ-HA; Bailey & Wells, 2015)

- Thoughts can Cause Illness (MCQ-CI)
- Beliefs about Biased Thinking (MCQ-BT)
- Thoughts about Illness are Uncontrollable (MCQ-IU)

**Disgust Propensity and Sensitivity Scale-Revised**

(DPSS-R; Olatunji et al., 2007)

- Disgust Propensity (DPSS-P)
- Disgust Sensitivity (DPSS-S)



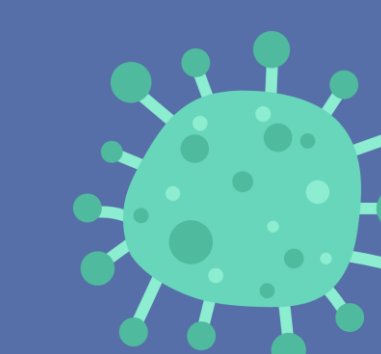
Disgust sensitivity  
predicts health  
anxiety, even when  
controlling for OCD  
and metacognitions

Correlations	OCI-R	MCQ-CI	MCQ-BT	MCQ-IU	DPSS-P	DPSS-S
SHAI	.58**	.38**	.51**	.65**	.46**	.54**

Regression	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> Change	<i>t</i>	<i>pr</i>
Step 1.	.573	.329**		
OCI-R			16.25**	.57
Step 2.	.708	.173**		
OCI-R			7.56**	.31
MCQ-CI			1.77	.08
MCQ-BT			2.56*	.11
MCQ-IU			9.95**	.40
Step 3.	.723	.020**		
OCI-R			5.21**	.16
MCQ-CI			1.14	.03
MCQ-BT			2.33*	.07
MCQ-IU			8.90**	.27
DPSS-P			0.81	.02
DPSS-S			3.54**	.11

Note. *pr* = partial correlation. \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01.

## Discussion



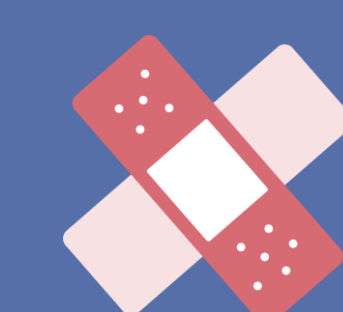
Disgust sensitivity predicted health anxiety, even when the symptoms of OCD and metacognitions about health were controlled for



Metacognitive beliefs about biased thinking and thoughts about illness being uncontrollable also significantly predicted health anxiety



Future research may want to investigate how disgust sensitivity and metacognitive beliefs about biased thinking and thoughts about illness being uncontrollable could interact to contribute to HA symptoms



Targeting disgust sensitivity may also be a valuable technique for clinicians to employ when treating health anxiety

## References

Scan here to see the abstract, a copy of the poster, and full references

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