

# The Relationship Between COVID-19 Anxiety and Anxiety Disorder Symptoms

Layton J. Byam & Alexander M. Penney

Submission ID# 64453

For more information contact Layton Byam at [byaml@mymacewan.ca](mailto:byaml@mymacewan.ca)

**Acknowledgement:** This dissemination was funded by a USRI Dissemination Grant from MacEwan University's Office of Research Services.



# Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has been changing the lives of individuals around the globe. It has been reported that there has been a rise in anxiety reported in Canada's general population since its start. (Dozois, 2020)

## Previous Pandemic Research

- Higher levels of anxiety were found in individuals with more knowledge about the Zika virus (Blakely & Abramowitz, 2017)
- Health anxiety predicted higher levels of H1N1 anxiety (Wheaton et al., 2012)
- Obsessive-compulsive symptoms predicted fear of H1N1 (Brand et al., 2013)

## COVID-19 Anxiety Research

- Health anxiety has been positively correlated with COVID-19 anxiety in recent studies (Jungmann & Witthöff, 2020; Martens et al., 2020; Shukri et al., 2020)





# Purpose

## **Aim:**

Explore if COVID-19 anxiety is associated with symptoms of specific anxiety-related disorders

## **Hypothesis:**

Individual high in health anxiety and obsessive-compulsive symptoms will report greater COVID-19 anxiety

# Methods

Sample: 416 undergraduate students; *Mage* = 21.05 years; 63.7% female

Data collected: September 2020 to January 2021

Participants completed the study online through Qualtrics

Fear of Coronavirus Scale (Ahorsu et al., 2020)

Coronavirus 19 Phobia Scale (Arpaci et al., 2020)

COVID Stress Scale (Taylor et al., 2020)

Short Health Anxiety Index (SHAI; Salkovskis et al., 2002)

Obsessive-Compulsive Inventory-Revised (OCI-R; Foa et al., 2002)

Panic Disorder Severity Scale-Self Report (PDSS-SR; Houck et al., 2002)

Patient Health Questionnaire - 15 (PHQ-15; Kroenke et al., 2002)

Generalized Anxiety Disorder - 7 (GAD-7; Spitzer et al., 2006)

Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS; Mattick & Clarke, 1998)

# Results

Pearson <i>r</i> Correlations	SHAI	OCI-R	PDSS-SR	PHQ-15	GAD-7	SIAS
Fear of Coronavirus	.54**	.47**	.50**	.40**	.49**	.38**
Coronavirus 19 Phobia	.61**	.59**	.53**	.45**	.53**	.44**
COVID Stress	.58**	.63**	.49**	.42**	.52**	.39**

DV = Fear of Coronavirus Scale

DV = Coronavirus 19 Phobia Scale

DV = COVID Stress Scale

Variable	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>t</i>	<i>pr</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>t</i>	<i>pr</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>t</i>	<i>pr</i>
Step 1	.625	.390			.734	.539			.686	.471		
SHAI			5.28**	.32**			6.95**	.40**			5.28**	.32**
OCI-R			0.64	.04			3.73**	.23**			4.05**	.25**
PDSS-SR			2.37*	.15*			2.33*	.15*			1.78	.11
PHQ-15			-0.45	-.03			-0.57	-.04			-1.41	-.09
GAD-7			1.84	.12			0.94	.06			1.95	.12
SIAS			1.07	.07			1.13	.07			0.46	.03

Note. *pr* = partial correlation. \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .001

# Implications

The findings show that health anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and panic disorder symptoms are particularly relevant to COVID-19 anxiety.

Therapists with clients experiencing health anxiety, obsessive-compulsive, or panic disorder symptoms should consider screening for COVID-19 anxiety.

