

## Experts to share simple tools to address anxiety, depression in patients

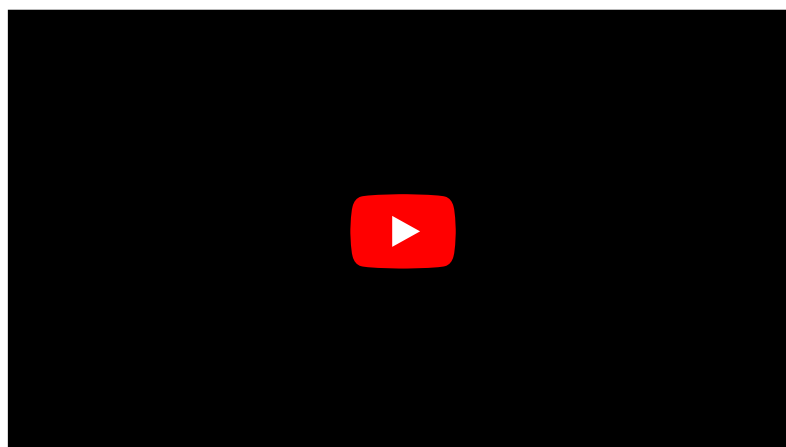
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**Editor's note:** *The 2018 AAP National Conference & Exhibition will take place from Nov. 2-6 in Orlando.*

When a child presents to your office with symptoms of anxiety, your mind may begin to race and your stress level may creep up as you try to determine a plan of action.

Take a deep breath and plan to attend the session titled “Relax: Office-Based Strategies to Help Stressed-Out Kids” led by Carolyn Bridgemohan, M.D., FAAP, and Carol Cohen Weitzman, M.D., FAAP.

The seminar will be held from 2-3:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 4 (S2098) in room W303 of the convention center and again from 8:30-10 a.m. Monday, Nov. 5 (S3038) in room W311CD.

“Pediatricians feel very daunted by the idea of kids who come in and present with anxiety or depression or somatic complaints, and they don’t really know how to talk to families about it, how to assess kids,” said Dr. Weitzman, professor of pediatrics and Child Study Center director, Yale Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics, Yale School of Medicine.

Drs. Weitzman and Bridgemohan will reassure attendees that they can diagnose and treat patients with mild symptoms — and will provide tools to help them do so.

Dr. Weitzman is chair and Dr. Bridgemohan is a member of the AAP Section on Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics Executive Committee, and both are members of the AAP Council on Children with Disabilities.

After providing an overview of the epidemiology of anxiety and depression and symptoms in various age groups, they will share screening tools and evidence-based therapies pediatricians can try, including medications. The active learning session will incorporate discussions and a chance to practice delivering some of the interventions.

Rest assured, however, the strategies won’t be complicated or overly time-consuming to implement.

“This is a kind of ‘you can do it’ workshop in the sense that we hope to give people some very practical skills and tools to help them build their own toolkit to be able to intervene in the office in effective ways for kids with more mild presentations,” Dr. Weitzman said.

They also will emphasize that medication should not be the first or only option.

“Our goal is to provide strategies that might decrease symptoms and improve functioning by using behavioral interventions to prevent the need for medication use or decrease the need for medication use,” said Dr. Bridgemohan, co-director of the Autism Spectrum Center, Division of Developmental Medicine, Boston Children’s Hospital.

Added Dr. Weitzman: “It can be very satisfying to be able to try to implement some very basic strategy and actually see that it helps.”

Both agree that pediatricians are in an ideal position to make a difference in the lives of children with mental health struggles and their families.

“Being able to work with somebody that you already trust and that knows you and has known you since you were a baby can be reassuring to a lot of kids and teens,” Dr. Bridgemohan said.

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