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Separation anxiety in young school-aged children post-COVID-19: prevention and management

Authors: Bauer A, Fitzgerald P, Martin P, Rowell A, Walsworth K, Wun J

Learning Community: Green 24

Age Group: Young, school-aged children

Topic: PEDS/Anxiety

Curriculum Tie-In: Mental Health / Neuroscience
Background
The prevalence of separation anxiety in young school-aged children in the United States has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Return to school may increase the prevalence further as well as intensify symptoms in children with an existing diagnosis of separation anxiety disorder.

Objectives
This infographic will help attune parents of young, school-aged children to potential signs and symptoms of pathological anxiety during moments of normal and/or expected separation from their children (e.g. the school day).

Through increased awareness, empower parents to apply appropriate prevention and management strategies for separation anxiety disorder, and engage community support, especially teachers and pediatric medical professionals, in this process.

Considerations of the Expanded Chronic Care Model:
-Self-Management/Develop Personal Skills
Enhance skills of parents and caregivers to promote health and wellness of their children, especially to prevent or mitigate separation anxiety

-Decision Support
Encourage and advocate for community level –school, in this case – ability to promote health of children and prevent or mitigate separation anxiety

Link to larger view of infographic: Separation Anxiety and your Child
Professional Identity Formation: considerations

As physicians, it will be important to have a breadth of knowledge and understanding for patients at diverse stages of the life course. Working to gather information and study the current literature regarding pediatric separation anxiety, a generally underdiagnosed and preventable condition, sharpens this service and scholarly aspect of practicing medicine. Regardless of our chosen specialties, we have a duty to provide our patients (and their caregivers) clear, compassionate, and up-to-date information. Furthermore, this project helps inform practice with the expanded chronic care model, particularly by focusing on decision support and developing the skills of patients and the community to prevent and manage chronic illness.