Chapter – VI

Conclusions, Implications and Suggestions for Future Research
CONCLUSIONS

From the discussion it is concluded that the asthmatics differ significantly from non-asthmatic normal counterparts in terms of attributional style and anxiety sensitivity. Global attributions for negative events emerged as a significant factor. Chronicity also emerged as an important mediating variable between attributional style and asthma, as chronicity increases the patients make more internal and unstable attributions for positive events and global and stable attributions for negative events. Patients of different age groups also reveal significant differences in their attributional style. 20 to 35 years age group show most positive attributional style, making internal and stable attribution for positive events and unstable attribution for negative events. 35 to 50 years age group show the most pathological attributional style making stable attribution for negative events. When gender differences were probed it emerged as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between attributional style and asthma. Women patients revealed a depressogenic attributional style.

When anxiety sensitivity is taken into consideration it is found that it is undoubtedly crucial variable that may enhance the probability of asthmatic attacks. Chronicity, age and gender mediate anxiety sensitivity and asthma relationship. Patients with shortest duration of illness report more physical concerns. As duration of illness increases patients exhibit more mental incapacitation and social concerns. Age of the patients seems to mediate only the lower order factors on anxiety sensitivity as 12 to 20 years age group
expresses more physical concerns while the highest age group (35 to 50 years) reports more mental incapacitation and social concerns.

As regards the role of gender it is found that though male asthmatics as compared to non-asthmatic males have higher level of anxiety sensitivity but as compared to women asthmatic they are low on anxiety sensitivity with no specific concerns. Women asthmatics have high mental incapacitation concerns and social concerns.

IMPLICATIONS

The paradigm shift in psychology and medicine led its professionals to adopt a bio-psycho-social perspective which resulted in an increased interest of the researcher in exploring psychological aspects of various physical ailments. This perspective maintaining that many illnesses are associated with structural damage, and may require chemical or surgical intervention. However, the presence of structural damage does not rule out the possibility that psychological variables were critical in precipitating the disorder. The conditions that maintain a disorder need not be the same as the condition that led to the disorder. Thus, although psychological manipulations may not be effective in curing an established disorder, they may be effectively used to reduce the overall incidence of the disease though the implementation of preventive medicine programs.

The present study is an humble effort in the same direction. As the results of the present investigation advocate the role of two of the important
psychological variables- attributional style and anxiety sensitivity- in asthma, the study will have the following implications:

1. It will contribute to the repertory of researches in the field of medical psychology.

2. It will help the health-care professionals to understand the role of two important cognitive variables, namely attributional style and anxiety sensitivity, among asthmatics.

3. The results of the present study, to a great extent, may also have implications for asthma management. Interventions may be used which would target the attributional style and anxiety sensitivity. Professionals can think of changing these cognitive states of mind of asthmatics to help them recover early and improve their health. There are evidences that cognitive therapy can change explanatory style from pessimistic to optimistic (Seligman et al., 1988). It is also hoped that anxiety sensitivity may also be reduced by using certain cognitive therapy techniques.

4. Understanding of these dynamics may also help parents to think about fostering in their children those cognitive states/styles which will be helpful to them in later life. In the words of Peterson, “It seems unlikely that anyone would be rescued from death’s door by changing his or her explanatory style. But it is not so far-fetched to think that the deliberate encouraging of an optimistic way of explaining events, started early in
life, might later pay dividends in terms of increased quantity and quality of life. And it is not far-fetched to think that the acquisition of an optimistic explanatory style might help a person recover more quickly and more fully from a less than fatal illness” (Peterson, 1995).

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite of voluminous work on bio-psycho-social variables among the psychosomatic patients, there are many other areas that need to be explored further in order to gain better understanding of the phenomenon. What ever may be the result of the investigation it does not mean that it blocks the way to future researches.

- Future researches should investigate the attributional style of asthmatic patients with or without depression, in order to reflect how they explain the events that befall them (in depressive or in efficacious manner).
- In future, in the same way, asthmatic with or without panic-related symptomatology may be taken to find out the differences in their level of anxiety sensitivity.
- Better result would also be obtained if we take into consideration other factors, such as- disease expectations, illness uncertainty, and the biographical characteristics of the patients.
- Although the present investigation had taken into consideration the age, duration of disease and gender, additional measures of subjective and
objective disease severity (including Pulmonary Function Test) should also be included in the future investigation.

- Researcher may use the revised version of Attributional Style Questionnaire and Anxiety Sensitivity Index.

- Finally, the measure included in the present investigation were all self-reported in nature, introspective reports given by asthmatic patients may add potential in the investigation.