

Psychological Aspects of Travel

Author: Iain B.McIntosh BA(Hons) MBChB. FFTM RCPS(Glas)

International relocation is associated with psychological stress, behavioural reaction, covert and overt distress¹. Global transportation is stressful on the individual². Air travel in particular is associated with anxiety and fear. Many travellers exhibit anxiety at aircraft takeoff and landing³. The aviation environment provides physical, psychological and emotional stressors which can affect comfort, health and safety of passengers⁴.

Some people fear, travel over water, transport through a tunnel or, close confinement. Others are phobic of air, sea or train transportation⁵. Recent terrorist activities on trains, aircraft and at passenger terminals, with associated increased security measures and transit delays, have increased the psychological distress experienced by many travellers and brought behavioural responses.

Many more people are now exposed to the vicissitudes of global travel as cheaper air travel has encouraged use of this travel mode, at a time when airport congestion, aeroplane delays and inefficient management has become the norm. Air travel has become the normal mode of travel for long and short haul journeys for millions of people⁶. However this transport mode has always had a psychological effect on passengers³ and now airport transit is also having a disturbing effect on passengers⁷. Travel related stressors have increased over recent years. Their effect on the travelling public can result in minor or major anxiety. They can trigger major behavioural reactions and result in transport avoidance, with serious impact on global transportation systems.