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Anxiety and the Colposcopy Experience

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Anxiety

- Can be described as a vague, unpleasant emotional state
  - Incl. Feelings of dread, distress, apprehension, uneasiness

- Is accompanied by racing heart, trembling, light-headedness, sweating, rapid breathing
Anxiety in Cervical Screening and Colposcopy

- Anxiety is a commonly experienced reaction
  - Large percentage of women report fear and anxiety following abnormal smear results
  - Many women also report anticipatory anxiety prior to colposcopy

- A moderate amount of anxiety may be beneficial

- Anxiety decreases following colposcopy
Monitoring-blunting

- People differ in their ways of dealing with medical situations

- **Monitors** – prefer lots of information, and scan the environment for cues

- **Blunters** - try to ignore threat-relevant information
Study to Reduce Anxiety During Colposcopy

- Interested in reducing the impact of the colposcopy procedure itself

- Patients assigned to one of four conditions
  - Relaxation
  - Distraction
  - Focus
  - Control
Results

- Blood pressure was recorded during the colposcopy.
- For systolic BP and diastolic BP monitoring style and study condition interacted.
The graph shows the mean systolic blood pressure time 2 during procedure for different study conditions:

- **Relaxation**
- **Cognitive Distraction**
- **Sensory Focus**
- **Control**

The conditions are categorized as **Low** or **High** monitoring. The graph indicates a significant increase in mean blood pressure for the **Sensory Focus** condition under **High** monitoring compared to the other conditions.
Implications

- Patients that normally choose to distract from stressful situations benefit from relaxation or distraction, and should not watch their colposcopies.

- Patients that normally choose to pay close attention to what’s going on still benefit more from relaxation than being left to cope on their own.
Take Home Message

- Anxiety is a commonly experienced reaction to cervical screening and colposcopy
- A moderate amount of anticipatory anxiety may be a good thing
- Relaxation during colposcopy reduces anxiety and stress both for those that normally want little information and for those that normally want lots of information