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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

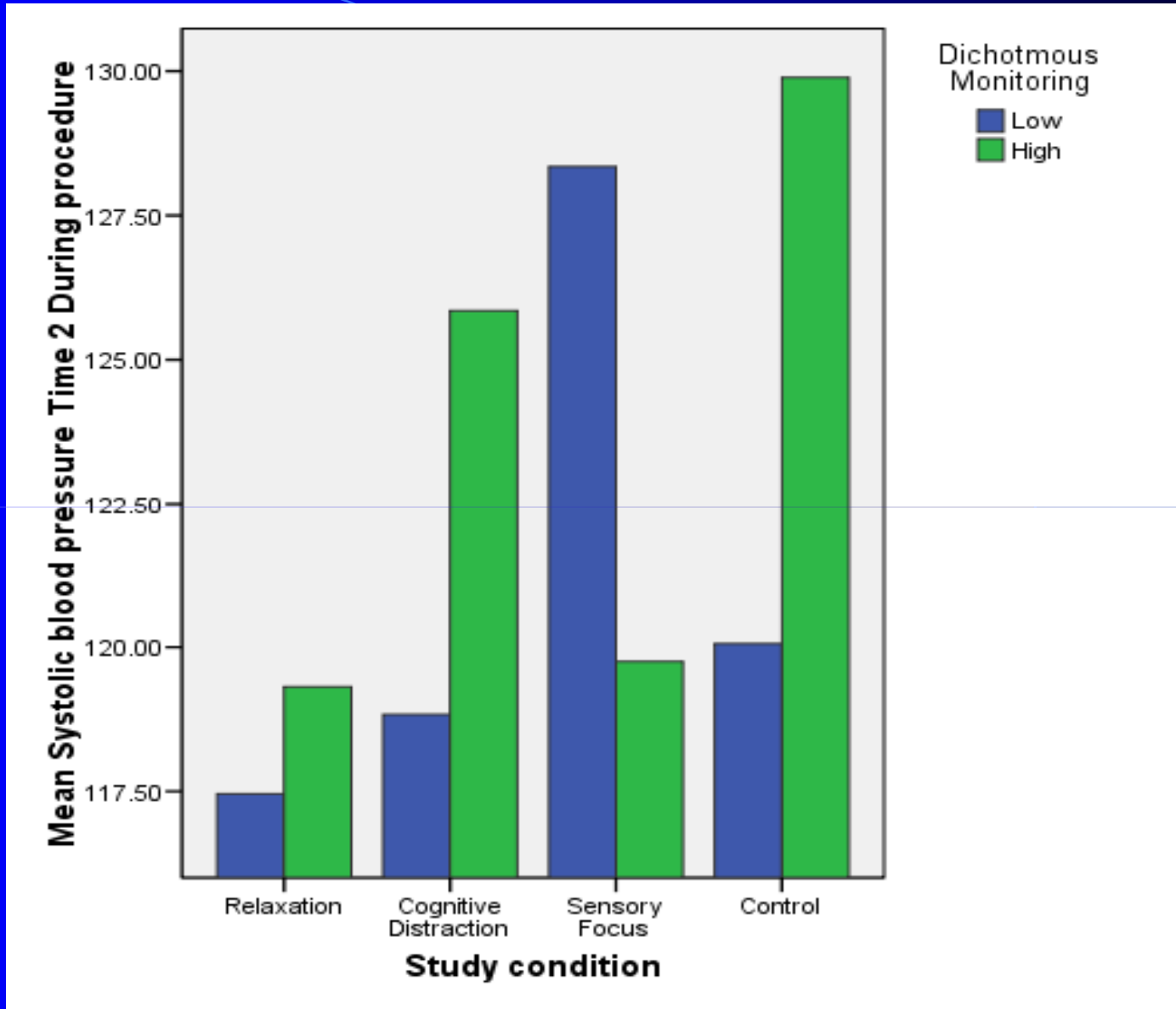
- Interested in reducing the impact of the colposcopy procedure itself
- Patients assigned to one of four conditions
 - Relaxation
 - Distraction
 - Focus
 - Control

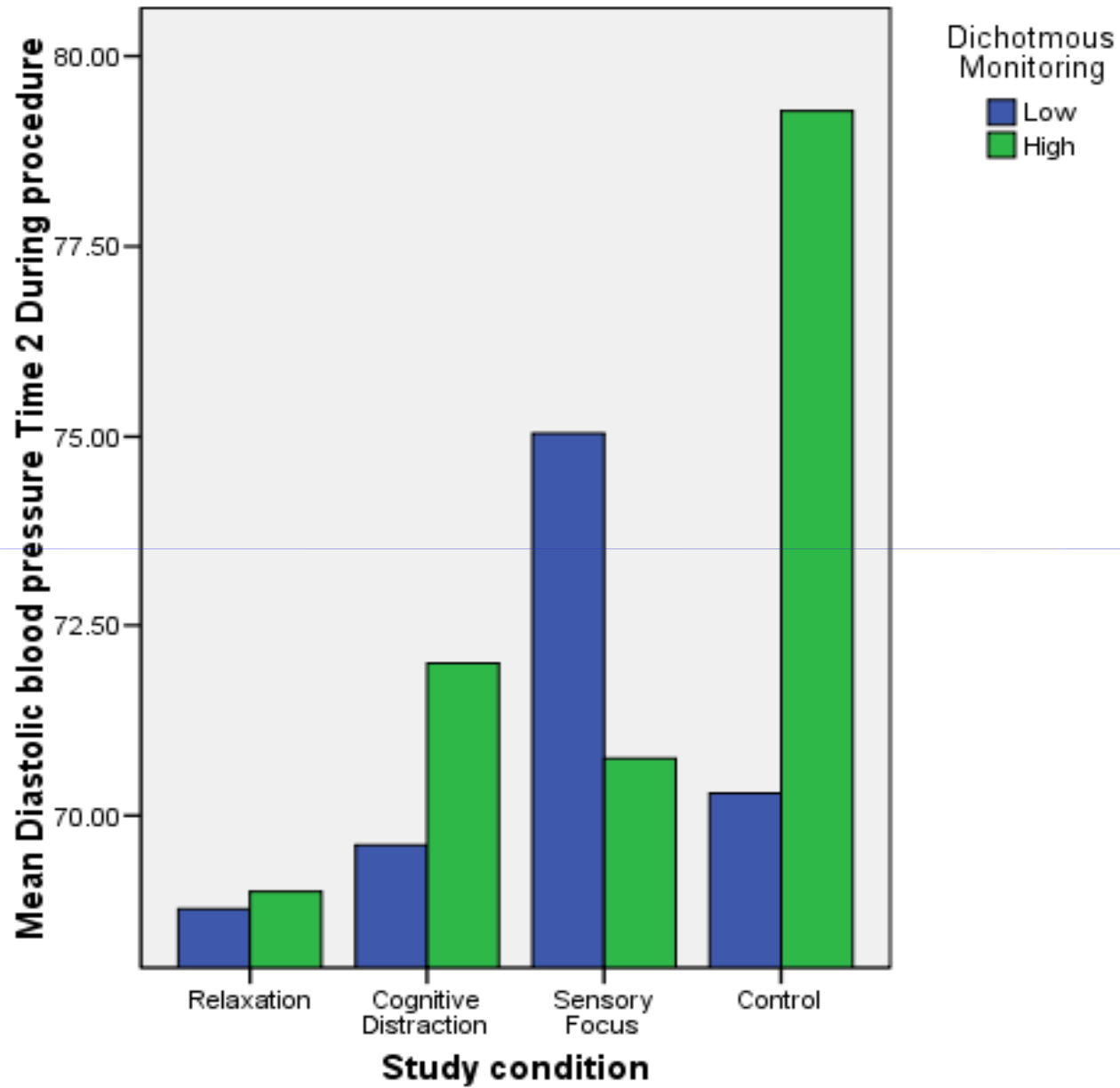


Results

- Blood pressure was recorded during the colposcopy
- For systolic BP and diastolic BP monitoring style and study condition interacted







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