



Interventions may reduce anxiety during colposcopy

Clinical question

How effective are interventions aimed at reducing anxiety during colposcopic examination?

Bottom line

Music during colposcopy significantly reduced anxiety levels and pain experienced during the procedure, compared with not listening to music. Video colposcopy (viewing the procedure on a TV monitor) also reduced anxiety significantly. There was no statistically significant difference between anxiety levels prior to colposcopy in women receiving information leaflets versus no leaflets, nor in those receiving information leaflets, video and counselling versus information leaflets and video but no counselling. However, knowledge scores were significantly higher and psychosexual dysfunction scores were significantly lower in women who received leaflets compared with those who did not.

Caveat

Overall, the methodological quality of the trials and the standard of reporting were poor. Some trials suffered from small numbers, and, in most cases, moderate or high risk of bias.

Context

Women can experience high levels of anxiety at all stages of screening for cervical cancer, including colposcopy. Colposcopy has been shown to be associated with high levels of anxiety, even higher than anxiety levels in women before surgery and similar to the anxiety levels in women following an abnormal screening test for foetal abnormalities. High levels of anxiety before and during colposcopy can have psychological consequences, including pain, discomfort and failure to return for follow-up.

Cochrane Systematic Review

Galaal K et al. Interventions for reducing anxiety in women undergoing colposcopy. Cochrane Reviews, 2011, Issue 12. Article No. CD006013. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD006013.pub3. *This review contains 6 studies involving 882 participants.*

PEARLS No. 355, February 2012, written by Brian R McAvoy

PEARLS are succinct summaries of Cochrane Systematic Reviews for primary care practitioners – developed by the Cochrane Primary Care Field, New Zealand Branch of the Australasian Cochrane Centre at the Department of General Practice and Primary Health Care, University of Auckland and funded by the New Zealand Guidelines Group. New Zealanders can access the Cochrane Library free via www.nzgg.org.nz

PEARLS provide guidance on whether a treatment is effective or ineffective. PEARLS are prepared as an educational resource and do not replace clinician judgement in the management of individual cases. View PEARLS online at: www.nzdoctor.co.nz; www.nzgg.org.nz; www.cochraneprimarycare.org