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
This review contains 6 studies involving 882 participants.

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