Improving Quality of Care During Gynecological Examinations by Reducing Anxiety and Discomfort

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Purpose
- To reduce the anxiety and discomfort women feel during routine gynecological exams using identified evidence-based interventions

Background
- Women commonly feel anxiety and discomfort during their gynecological exams which leads to delays in screening and treatment
- 88% report discomfort
- 55% report anxiety
- Cervical cancer accounts for a $150 billion financial burden in the US
- Healthy People 2020 set a goal for cervical cancer screening at 93% of eligible women getting a Pap every 3 years
- Screening rate for cervical cancer at WBAMC is 83%
- By reducing anxiety and discomfort, overall quality of patient-centered care is improved
- By making patients feel more comfortable, they engage in more health-seeking behaviors

Project Design
- Involved females, aged 21 and older presenting for routine gynecological exams at WBAMC
- Women were offered a choice of music to be played during their appointment
- Pelvic exams were conducted without the use of stirrups
- Women completed an eight-question survey about their experiences
- 17 women completed Likert-type surveys
- 65% reported no physical discomfort
- 53% reported no anxiety
- 76% reported no sense of vulnerability or loss of control
- 88% rated the quality of care as excellent
- 94% reported this experience made them more likely to return for a wellness exam in the future
- Patient comments:
  - “I am definitely more comfortable with music and no stirrups!”
  - “The music really helped to calm my nerves.”
  - “Stirrups are scary. I’m really glad the stirrups didn’t come out.”
  - “Way better experience than past.”

Theoretical Framework
- Rosswurm & Larrabee Evidence-Based Practice Model

Results
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Conclusions
- Music is a low-cost intervention that proves successful at reducing anxiety and discomfort
- Forgoing stirrups is a no-cost intervention that improves comfort
- Interventions allowed women to feel less vulnerable and more in control of the visit
- Endocervical sample was still obtained in all cytology despite position change
- Music could be applied to other exams and procedures to reduce anxiety and discomfort
- Consider forgoing the use of stirrups for other types of gynecological exams to improve comfort

Survey results
- Did today’s experience with music and without stirrups make you more likely to return for wellness exams in the future?
  - Yes: 13
  - No: 4

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