

FEAR AND DISCOMFORT AS POSSIBLE RESPONSE TO A DISTRESS TEST IN SMOKERS UNDER NICOTINE WITHDRAWAL CONDITIONS

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Introduction: Some studies showed that nicotine withdrawal may increase the likelihood to develop anxiety or distress.

Objectives: Nicotine withdrawal symptoms (NWS) may specifically provide an opportunity to learn that physical sensations can be aversive, thus anxiety or distress-provoking.

Aims: We evaluated whether NWS predict the responding to a test inducing distress, the so called Breath Holding (BH) test, in regular smokers evaluated under nicotine withdrawal conditions or under non withdrawal conditions. Specifically, we studied if fear or discomfort are felt as a response to the test inducing distress.

Methods: We run a cross-over design study on current smokers. Each subject received either nicotine and placebo in two different test days according to a randomized, double-blind order. Four hours after the administration of nicotine or placebo, each subject underwent the BH test. Fear and Discomfort were evaluated by means of a Visual Analogue Scale (VAS-F for Fear and VAS-D for Discomfort).

Results: 20 subjects (10 females and 10 males) with a mean age of $32,05 \pm 10,13$ years were studied. At baseline the two conditions did not differ. No statistically significant results were found for VAS-F and VAS-D in terms of response to the BH test.

Conclusions: NWS seem not to affect the response to a distress test in current smokers at least when fear or discomfort are taken into account.