

## Publication

### Acute and delayed effects of alprazolam on flight phobics during exposure

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In order to test if a benzodiazepine would enhance or hinder the therapeutic effects of exposure, immediate and delayed effects of alprazolam on flight phobics were assessed by questionnaires and ambulatory physiological recording. Physiological measures included heart rate, skin conductance level and fluctuations, finger temperature, respiratory sinus arrhythmia, and various respiratory measures derived from two bands calibrated for each subject. Twenty-eight women with flying phobia flew twice at a 1-week interval. One and a half hours before flight 1, 14 randomly assigned phobics received double-blind 1 mg of alprazolam and 14 received placebo. On flight 1, alprazolam reduced self-reported anxiety (5.0 vs 7.4) and symptoms (5.3 vs 3.6) more than placebo, but induced an increase in heart rate (114 vs 105 bpm) and respiratory rate (22.7 vs 18.3 breaths/min). Before flight 2, the alprazolam group did not expect to be more anxious than the placebo group (6.7 vs 6.5), but in fact indicated more anxiety during flight (8.5 vs 5.6), and a substantial increase in panic attacks from flight 1 to flight 2 (7% vs 71%). Heart rates in the alprazolam group increased further (123 bpm). Results indicate that alprazolam increases physiological activation under acute stress conditions and hinders therapeutic effects of exposure in flying phobia.

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