

HFES: Multi-tasking can impair diagnostic performance

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(HealthDay)—Performing a complex concurrent memorization task negatively impacts diagnostic performance, according to a study that will be presented at the upcoming annual meeting of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society, held from Sept. 30 to Oct. 4 in San Diego.

Shi Cao and Yili Lu, Ph.D., from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, investigated the effects of concurrent tasks on diagnostic decision making using a representative medical diagnostic task. Potential confounding variables were controlled to allow the quantification of [diagnostic performance](#) and strategies.

The researchers found that a concurrent complex [memorization](#) task that required participants to listen to verbal updates and remember

information about other patients had a [negative impact](#) on performance of the diagnostic task. Diagnostic performance was not impacted by performance of a simple concurrent sound monitoring task. The same diagnostic strategies were used by participants in the single- and dual-task conditions.

"When a physician is actively focusing on a time-critical diagnostic decision, other necessary information—such as warnings, reminders, or situation updates—should be delivered through simple or intuitive channels as much as possible to minimize potential interference," Cao said in a statement.

More information: [More Information](#)

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