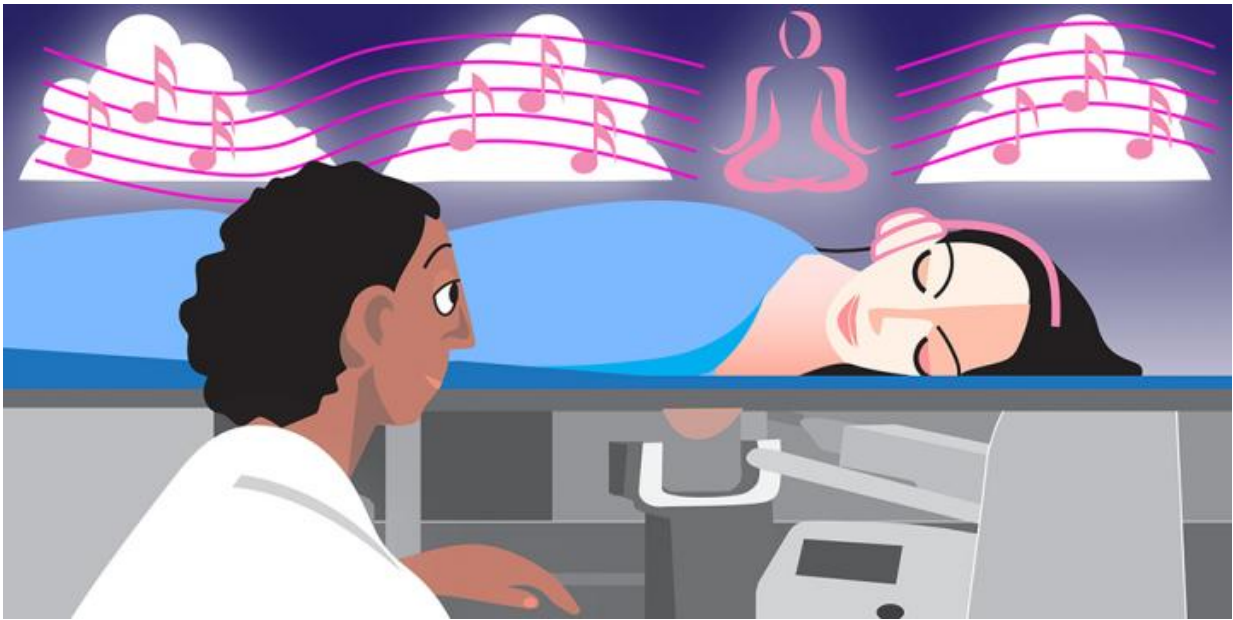


Meditation eases pain, anxiety and fatigue during breast cancer biopsy

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Meditation reduces stress during biopsy. Credit: Mark Dubowski for Duke Health

Meditation eases anxiety, fatigue and pain for women undergoing breast cancer biopsies, according to researchers at the Duke Cancer Institute. They also found that music is effective, but to a lesser extent.

The researchers note that adopting these simple, inexpensive interventions could be especially helpful in light of recent reports citing

anxiety and [pain](#) as potential harms from breast cancer screenings and testing.

"Image-guided needle biopsies for diagnosing breast cancer are very efficient and successful, but the anxiety and potential pain can have a negative impact on [patient care](#)," said Mary Scott Soo, M.D., associate professor of radiology at Duke Cancer Institute and lead author of the study published online February 4 in the *Journal of the American College of Radiology*.

"Patients who experience pain and anxiety may move during the procedure, which can reduce the effectiveness of biopsy, or they may not adhere to follow-up screening and testing," Soo said.

She added that the study comes at a time when federal reimbursement requirements are increasingly focusing on patient care and adjusting payments based on patient satisfaction.

"It's important that we address these issues to provide a better experience and more compassionate care for our patients," Soo said.

Soo and colleagues enrolled 121 women undergoing [breast cancer](#) diagnosis at Duke and randomly assigned them to receive one of three approaches as they underwent stereotactic and ultrasound-guided biopsy: a recorded meditation, music, or standard care with a technologist offering casual conversation and support.

The meditation was a guided "loving/kindness" script that focused on building positive emotions such as compassion towards oneself and others and releasing negative emotions.

Patients in the music group listened to their choice of instrumental jazz, classical piano, harp and flute, nature sounds or world music.

Standard-care patients received supportive and comforting dialogue with the radiologist or technologist.

Immediately before and after biopsy, participants completed questionnaires measuring nervousness and anxiety, ranking biopsy pain between a low of zero to a high of 10, and assessing feelings of weakness and fatigue.

Patients in the meditation and music groups reported significantly greater reductions in anxiety and fatigue after biopsy than those receiving standard care. The standard-care patients reported increased fatigue after biopsy.

The meditation group also showed significantly lower pain during biopsy when compared to the music group.

"Listening to guided meditation resulted in significantly lower biopsy pain during imaging-guided breast [biopsy](#), and both meditation and music reduced patient anxiety and fatigue," Soo said. "There are medical approaches to this—providing anti-[anxiety](#) drugs—but they sedate patients and require someone to drive them home.

"Meditation is simple and inexpensive, and could be a good alternative in these settings," Soo said. "We would like to see this study scaled up to include a multi-center trial, and see if the findings could be generalized to different practices."

Provided by Duke University Medical Center

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