

# If your health care provider is nice, you'll feel less pain

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Having blood drawn by a courteous health care provider can really take the sting out of those procedures, suggests a study being presented at the Anesthesiology 2019 annual meeting.

In fact, an empathetic provider—one who asks about patients' previous

experiences with needles and takes their preferences into account—could make all the difference when it comes to [pain](#) management. Patients in the study were 390% more likely to say their pain was well-controlled when the person taking their blood was courteous, the researchers found.

Researchers set out to assess whether more blood draws would increase the [pain experience](#) and then determine if [health](#) care worker courtesousness would ease the discomfort of a higher number of needle sticks.

"It's not surprising that a courteous health care provider can improve the patient experience, but we were shocked at just how powerful that factor was," said Mario Moric, M.S., lead author of the study and a biostatistician at Rush University Medical Center, Chicago. "We thought the more needle sticks the higher the [pain perception](#), but we found that effect was small. It turns out the experience of pain is much more significantly affected by the attitude of the people treating you."

Researchers analyzed responses from 4,740 [adult patients](#) about their experience when they were hospitalized, specifically two questions about [pain control](#) and one statement about the courtesy of the person who drew their blood. Patients were hospitalized for a variety of reasons including illness, surgery, etc. The average length of stay was 5.3 days and the average number of blood draws was 3.8.

For the two pain-related questions, patients answered from 1 (never) to 4 (always). Researchers determined that 3,882 of the 4,740 patients (82%) answered 4 when asked how often the staff did everything they could to help them with their pain and 3,112 (65%) answered 4 when asked how often their pain was well-controlled.

Patients were separately asked to rate the courtesy of the person who

took their blood from 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good). Researchers found those who answered 5 were 390% more likely to have rated their pain control as a 4 (the maximum), than those who rated their provider less courteous.

Repetitious blood draws are often a significant source of anxiety and concern and therefore a large part of the pain experience, the researchers note. The results suggest that while getting blood drawn several times a day can be unpleasant, if the person drawing [blood](#) is empathetic, the patient's overall pain experience can be improved.

"It's important to continue to improve health care procedures by making them less invasive, but listening to patients and letting them know you are trying to minimize their discomfort also is really powerful and should be a focus for all health care training programs," said Asokumar Buvanendran, M.D., co-author of the study, chair of the American Society of Anesthesiologists Committee on Pain Medicine and vice chair of research at Rush University Medical Center. "Being kind makes a big difference in the [patient experience](#), and that's good for everyone."

Provided by American Society of Anesthesiologists

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