

# Coitus May Be the Best Sexual Stress Reliever

BY ROBERT FINN  
San Francisco Bureau

SANTA FE, N.M. — It's been said that sex reduces stress, but all sexual activity is apparently not created equal.

In a laboratory test intended to induce extreme stress, healthy subjects who reported engaging in penile-vaginal intercourse during the previous 2 weeks experienced significantly smaller increases in blood pressure than those who reported masturbating or engaging in noncoital sexual activity, Stuart Brody, Ph.D., said at the annual meeting of the Society for Psychophysiological Research.

The subjects included 24 women and 22 men aged 19-37 years who were in the placebo arm of a larger study of the effects of vitamin C, said Dr. Brody of the University of Tübingen (Germany). They completed daily diaries about their sexual activities for a period of 2 weeks, and then their systolic and diastolic blood pressures were measured before, during, and after participating in the Trier Social Stress Test.

In this test, subjects are given 10 minutes to prepare an oral presentation on their job qualifications. After this preparatory period, they are ushered into a room where two examiners listen critically to the presentation. Subjects are then asked to perform mental calculations.

People who reported engaging only in penile-vaginal intercourse during the previous 14 days experienced significantly lower systolic blood pressure during the most stressful part of this test than did those who engaged in no sexual activity, masturbation, or noncoital intercourse.

The peak systolic blood pressure for

the intercourse-only group averaged 130 mm Hg, while the other groups' averages ranged from 143 mm Hg to 165 mm Hg, which Dr. Brody described as "an enormous difference." The effects on diastolic blood pressure were not as dramatic.

The magnitude of this effect was much greater than that reported in other studies. The beneficial effect of penile-vaginal intercourse on systolic blood pressure in the Trier Social Stress Test is apparently more pronounced than any other inter-

vention, including whether the subjects smoke or have a family history of hypertension; whether they're using ACE inhibitors,  $\beta$ -blockers, or oral contraceptives; or whether they exercise, are depressed, or are in marital distress, he said.

The beneficial effect of penile-vaginal intercourse on blood pressure seemed to disappear in people who also engaged in masturbation or noncoital intercourse during the 14-day period.

The statistical significance of the re-

sults was not affected if participants had ever engaged in homosexual activity, and the groups did not differ on measures of neuroticism, extraversion, or anxiety.

Dr. Brody described his results as politically incorrect: "The politically correct thing is to parrot the ideology first espoused by Kinsey and also by Herbert Marcuse, which is that all forms of sex are equivalent, except that intercourse is worse because it's part of the patriarchal power structure." ■

## Many Cardiac Patients Going Untreated

WASHINGTON — Depression is underdiagnosed in patients with acute coronary syndrome, Alpesh A. Amin, M.D., said in a poster at a scientific forum sponsored by the American Heart Association.

In a prospective study of 1,199 patients, scores on the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 consistent with depression were found in 183 (15%) at the time of hospital admission for ACS. Of those, 57 of 153 patients younger than 70 years (37%) and 4 of 30 patients aged 70 years and older (13.3%) had been clinically recognized as depressed. Only 32% of those under 70 years and 13.3% of those aged 70 years and older were taking medication to treat their depressive symptoms, said Dr. Amin of St. Luke's Hospital, Kansas City, Mo.

Recognition and treatment of depression were low across all age groups but significantly worse among patients aged 70 years and older, compared with those younger than 70 years. That gap highlights the need for improved psychiatric assessment of coronary patients, he noted.

—Heidi Splete



Visit [ZYPREXA.com](http://ZYPREXA.com)

OL29785 PRINTED IN USA. 3000065003 ©2004, ELI LILLY AND COMPANY. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.  
ZYPREXA is a registered trademark of Eli Lilly and Company.

**ZYPREXA**  
Olanzapine

Lilly