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The impact of psychological preparation for surgery on post-operative behavioural recovery: A systematic review

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Purpose: To review the impact of psychological preparation on behavioural recovery in adults undergoing elective surgery under general anaesthesia.

Background: Psychological preparation for surgery has been found to be beneficial for post-operative behavioural recovery. Additional studies have since been published and hospital procedures have changed. This poster reports updated review findings on the impact of psychological preparation on behavioural recovery.

Methods: Searches were conducted in CENTRAL, MEDLINE, EMBASE, PsycINFO, CINAHL, Dissertation Abstracts and Web of Science. Reference lists were searched and authors contacted to identify further research. Inclusion criteria were: randomised controlled trials; adults undergoing elective surgery under general anaesthesia; interventions of procedural information, sensory information, behavioural instruction, cognitive intervention, relaxation, hypnosis, emotion-focused interventions; behavioural recovery outcomes (with published psychometrics) within one month post-surgery.

Findings: Searches identified 5116 papers. Fourteen studies addressing behavioural recovery were included with wide variation in intervention target and outcome measures; these were narratively synthesised. Behavioural instruction was the most common intervention type. Beneficial effects of interventions were reported in five studies; no differences in four; one reported mixed results depending on outcome; one identified more negative outcomes for intervention participants and three reported no analyses.

Conclusions: Psychological preparation has potential to improve behavioural recovery outcomes post-surgery but evidence is inconsistent. Trials need to use outcomes that can be compared across studies and to report findings in sufficient detail to allow data to be meta-analysed. Reporting of intervention and control content was poor; standard terminology to describe interventions is needed.