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Effects of bright light during an intensive evening study session on stress-related symptoms in students

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So far, exposure to bright light has been primarily used to treat affective disorders. Nevertheless, there is also some evidence in recent studies that exposure to bright light might also reduce symptoms of stress-related disorders, such as burnout.
In the current semi-naturalistic, controlled lab study in healthy students, we explored the effects of a four-hour bright light exposure in the evening (6:30 to 10:30 p.m.) on five consecutive days while studying for a time-consuming exam. As primary outcome measures, we assessed general anxiety, depression, somatization, and test anxiety. Additionally, cognitive measures such as working memory and response inhibition were used during light exposure. Furthermore, sleep quality was measured actigraphically each morning, and heart rate variability was assessed over a 24h span on the first and last day of exposure and during cognitive testing.
A preliminary data analysis was run with a sub-sample of 22 students. Tentative results point to possible positive effects of bright light concerning self-reported test anxiety and symptoms of somatization, while no adverse effects of bright light exposure in the evening could be detected.

Primary author: DICK, Maximilian (Universität Innsbruck)

Co-authors: LACKNER, Helmut K. (Medizinische Universität Graz); WEISS, Elisabeth M. (Universität Innsbruck); CANAZEI, Markus (Universität Innsbruck)

Presenters: DICK, Maximilian (Universität Innsbruck); LACKNER, Helmut K. (Medizinische Universität Graz); WEISS, Elisabeth M. (Universität Innsbruck); CANAZEI, Markus (Universität Innsbruck)

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