

# Surgeon's calming words may ease stress of surgery

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(HealthDay)—Few moments in life are more daunting than those just before a surgery. But a new study finds that some reassuring words from a doctor just before an operation begins may be more effective than drugs in easing patient anxiety.

The French study was led by Dr. Emmanuel Boselli, a physician anesthesiologist at Edouard Herriot Hospital in Lyons. His team examined the use of what's known as "conversational hypnosis."

This method involves the doctor talking quietly and positively to the patient—saying things such as "Keep calm and quiet," rather than "Please don't move"—and focusing the patient's attention on something other than anesthesia and [surgery](#) preparations.

In a study involving 100 patients undergoing hand surgery, this approach was compared to the use of hydroxyzine, a pill often given to patients to relax them before surgery.

Fifty of the patients received conversational hypnosis while being given regional anesthesia, while the other 50 were given hydroxyzine 30 minutes to an hour before receiving anesthesia.

The patients who received conversational hypnosis were calmer and had lower anxiety levels than those who took the anti-anxiety drug, according to the study presented earlier this month at the annual meeting of the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA).

"The anesthesiologist uses calm, positive words to divert the patient's attention and help him or her feel more comfortable," Boselli explained in an ASA news release.

"It reflects a change in the way the physician interacts with the patient and takes just a few minutes," he added.

"Conversational hypnosis can be used prior to surgery in conscious [patients](#) having local or [regional anesthesia](#)," Boselli said. "It also could be beneficial before [general anesthesia](#) to decrease [patient anxiety](#)."

**More information:** The U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality has more about [surgery](#).

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