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Study: Anxiety affects attention

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GRANADA, Spain, June 14 (UPI) -- Anxiety may affect the way in which some people focus their attention on what is happening around them, researchers in Spain said.

Antonia Pilar Pacheco-Unguetti, Alberto Acosta, Alicia Callejas and Juan Lupianez of the University of Granada in Spain said trait anxiety was a quality of personality in which one tends toward being anxious and restless. State anxiety was an emotional reaction to stressful situations.

The study, published in the journal Psychological Science, found those with high trait anxiety performed in a way that was deficient in attention. Conversely, the study participants with high state anxiety presented an over-functioning of attention. In particular, they exhibited heightening of the alerting and orienting networks influenced by the processing/analysis of stimuli.

The researchers suggested their finding may help in developing therapies to help patients with anxiety disorders -- for instance, in finding ways anxiety disorders patients may cope with distracting information.

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