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HOW DO PATIENTS WITH SOCIAL PHOBIA MANAGE INTERPERSONAL DISTANCE DURING SOCIAL INTERACTIONS ?

S. Lambrey, C. Voisin, F.-X. Roucault, P. Canet, G. Rauturau, R. Jouvent, A. Pelissolo  
Centre Emotion, CNRS - Université Paris 6, Paris, France

Personal space is the area individuals maintain around themselves into which others cannot intrude without arousing discomfort. This concept is potentially relevant in clinical psychiatry, especially in the context of disorders associated with social anxiety or social cognition disorders. Consistent with this idea, some rare studies have shown that personal space managing and interpersonal distance setting is disturbed in schizophrenic and bipolar patients. However, surprisingly, there is no data on personal space in social phobia. In this study, we aimed to investigate the characteristics of personal space in patients with social phobia using immersive and interactive virtual environments. Overall, the more the level of anxiety the more subjects leave space between themselves and others. The detailed results are discussed in the frame of cognitive models of social anxiety.