Emotion, Information Processing, and Risk Perception

- Discrete emotions can influence tendency to rely on systematic or heuristic information processing (Han et al., 2007; Tiedens & Linton, 2001).
- Research is necessary to understand whether the influence of emotion on information processing/ risk perception functions through selective visual attention.
- No studies have examined how discrete negative emotions function in the context of medical decision-making in response to visually presented information.

Informed Consent for Cancer Clinical Trials

- Clinical trials are essential for developing methods to prevent and treat cancer.
- Researchers have an ethical obligation to ensure patients enroll voluntarily and with full understanding, but volunteers often hold mistaken beliefs.
- Suboptimal enrollment rates may be due to poor understanding.
- Informed consent documents need to provide all information relevant to making a decision.
  - Documents are long and complex.
  - Investigators rarely assess volunteers’ understanding process.
- Based on previous research (Lerner & Keltner, 2001; Tiedens & Linton, 2001), we predicted:
  - Anger would increase heuristic processing and decrease accuracy.
  - Fear would decrease heuristic processing and increase accuracy.

Methods

- 204 participants (community sample).
  - Mean age 44.33 (15.35); 66% female; 49% White.
  - Ostensibly separate studies paradigm.
  - “Perspective taking” video induction (validated with manipulation check).
  - Eye-tracking study of real informed consent document for cancer prevention clinical trial.

Accurate Trial Benefit Perceptions

Visual Attention: “Scanning” (in seconds)

Hypothetical Decisions to Participate

Discussion

- Negative emotion influences information processing and accurate perceptions, particularly among men.
- Fear reduces willingness to participate among women.
- Anger may facilitate effective heuristic information processing, while fear does the opposite.
  - Suggests that anger may be beneficial under uncertainty (consistent with Moons & Mackie, 2007).
- Emotional context of informed consent is important to consider – particularly when context involves uncertainty.