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Why are we using surgery as a first line of treatment for an anxiety disorder?

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Sirs: Chou et al. have cogently drawn attention to the importance of being conservative in the surgical treatment of blushing [1]. We argue that for some of the patients the surgical treatment may be worse than the disease, since intolerable reflex sweating is reported in a high percent of patients.

Blushing of clinical severity is the hallmark physical sign of social phobia [2], an anxiety disorder,

which has recently been linked to an allele-variant polymorphism in the Beta-1 adrenergic receptor [4]. Social phobia, which underlies blushing, is (like major depression) a major risk factor for suicide [2].

Ganglionic clipping represents important progress in the treatment of blushing, however, ethically, and in light of cost issues, clinicians should encourage blushers to first go through a trial of the evidence-based treatment for the underlying cause of their blushing (Cochrane Database Syst Rev 2004;CD001206) [2, 3] before they go under the knife.

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