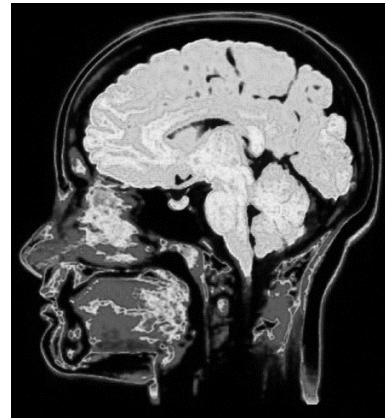


### Dread is worse than pain

‘When people are offered a reward, they prefer to have it as soon as possible, which could be interpreted to mean that we rate future experiences as less important when we’re making decisions. This reasoning would suggest that you would put off unpleasant things to the future as well. We found that this isn’t the case for most people,’ said lead researcher Dr Giles Story, from Imperial College London.

In his study, 35 participants were asked to choose between electric shocks of increasing intensity. In 71 per cent of tests, people chose to have the pain earlier, even though that meant a more painful stimulus. Similar results were found when volunteers had to choose between imagined dental appointments involving different levels of pain.

‘If pain can’t be avoided, most people choose to get it out of the way sooner, even if that means the pain is worse. One explanation, termed ‘dread’, is that anticipating pain is unpleasant or disadvantageous, rather like pain itself. Human brain imaging studies support the existence of dread.’ Dr Story added: ‘This might make sense if anticipating pain stops you from doing things well or enjoying yourself.’



‘The findings would also suggest that the same principles could be applied to deadlines or other ways of making something inevitable. It is more likely to result in you choosing to get it out of the way, even if it is something you are dreading,’ said Dr Story.

*dailymail.co.uk, 2013*