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# Thinking the worst? Fear- and pain-related thoughts among women with vulvodynia

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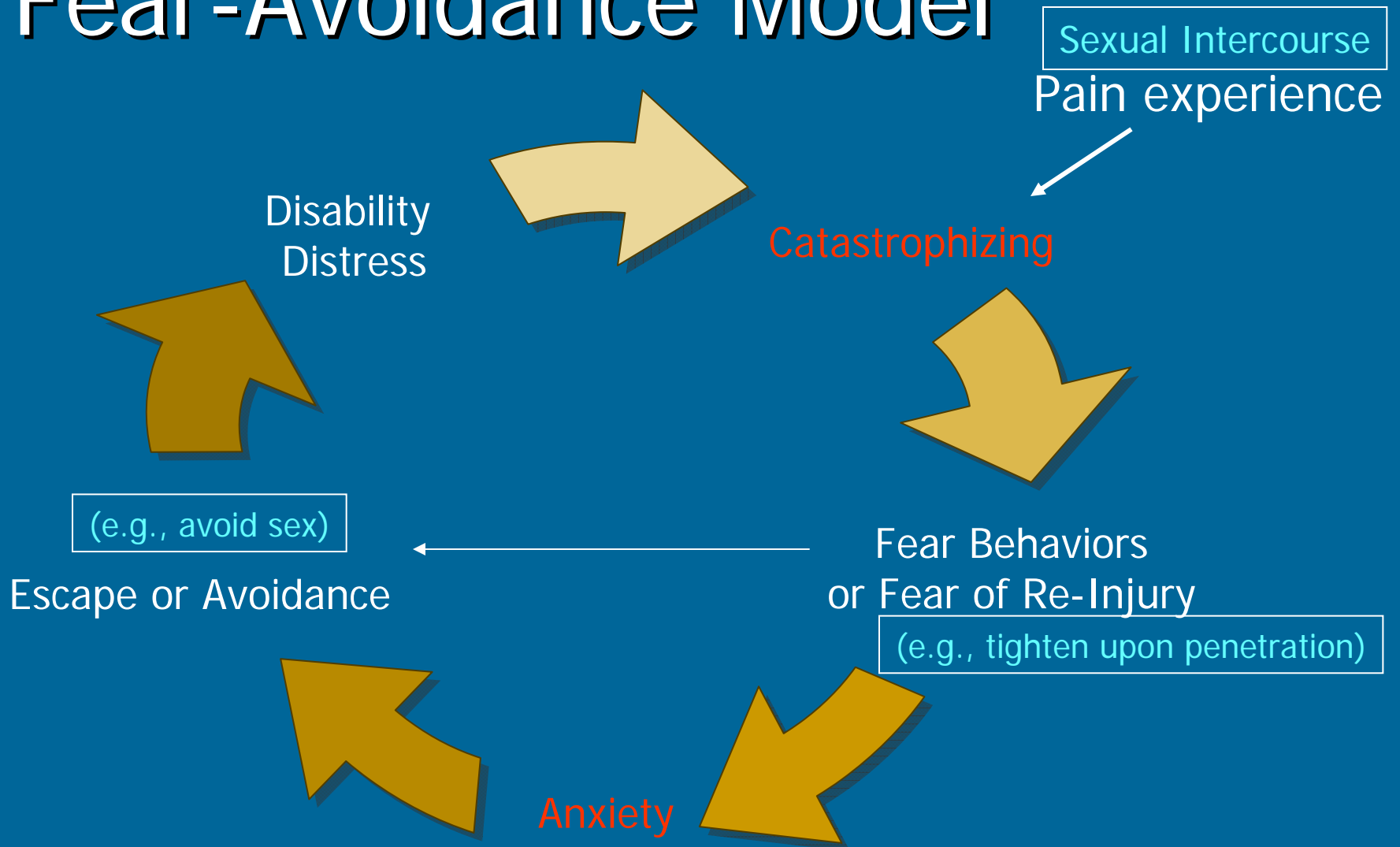
# Provoked Vestibulodynia (PVD)

- Most common subtype of vulvodynia
- Affects 12% of women
- Involves provoked pain localized to the vulvar vestibule

# Negative Impact of PVD

- Decreased sexual functioning
- Psychological distress
- Little known about women's perceptions of & reactions to their pain condition

# Fear-Avoidance Model



# Purposes of Current Study

- 1) To examine pain-related anxiety & catastrophizing among **women with PVD** vs. **control women**
- 2) To examine **vulvar** pain-related anxiety and catastrophizing to that associated with **non-vulvar** pain among **women with PVD**

# Methods

## ■ Participants

- ❑ 40 women with self-reported PVD ( $M$  age = 29.63,  $SD$  = 8.82)
- ❑ 40 control women ( $M$  age = 28.45,  $SD$  = 8.04)
- ❑ Matched on age (+/- 5 years) & relationship status

## ■ Procedure

- ❑ Telephone screening to ensure eligibility
- ❑ Completion of secure online survey

# Measures

- Pain-related anxiety and fear
  - Pain Anxiety Symptoms Scale (PASS-20) (McCracken et al., 2002)
- Pain-related catastrophizing
  - Pain Catastrophizing Scale (PCS) (Sullivan et al., 1995)
- Women with PVD completed these measures twice
- Pain intensity and unpleasantness
  - Numeric Rating Scale (0=no pain/unpleasantness; 10 worst pain/unpleasantness imaginable)

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How do women with PVD & controls  
compare on non-vulvar pain?

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# Between Group Differences: Non-Vulvar Pain Experiences

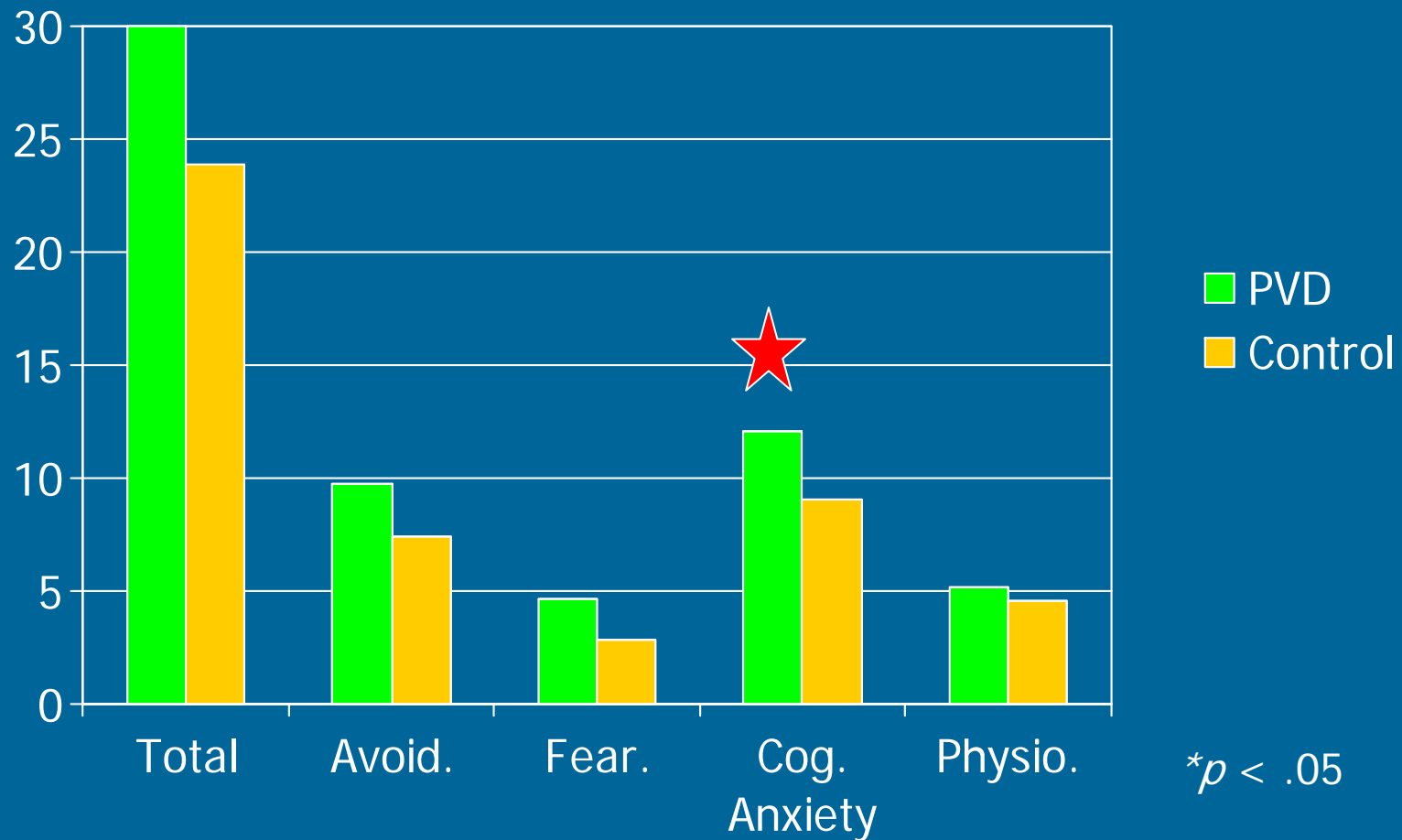
- 73% of women with PVD and 80% of control women reported regular experience of non-vulvar pain
- No significant group differences found for:
  - Frequency or types of pain reported
  - Pain intensity or unpleasantness ratings
  - Non-vulvar PASS-20 scores
  - Non-vulvar PCS scores

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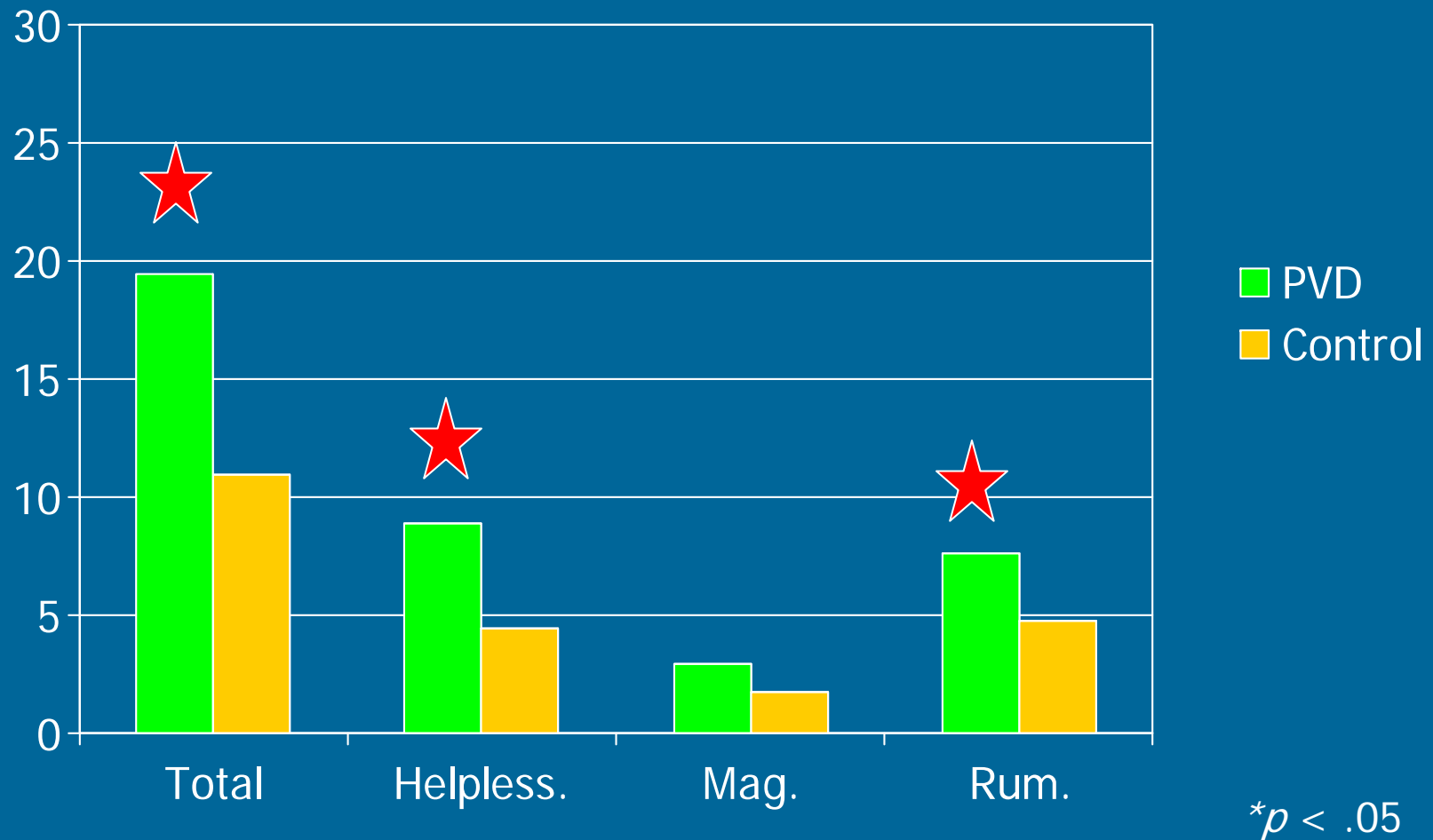
How does vulvar pain among women with PVD compare to control women's non-vulvar pain?

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# Between Group Differences: Vulvar vs. Non-Vulvar Pain Anxiety



# Between Group Differences: Vulvar vs. Non-Vulvar Pain Catastrophizing



How does vulvar pain compare to non-vulvar pain among women with PVD?

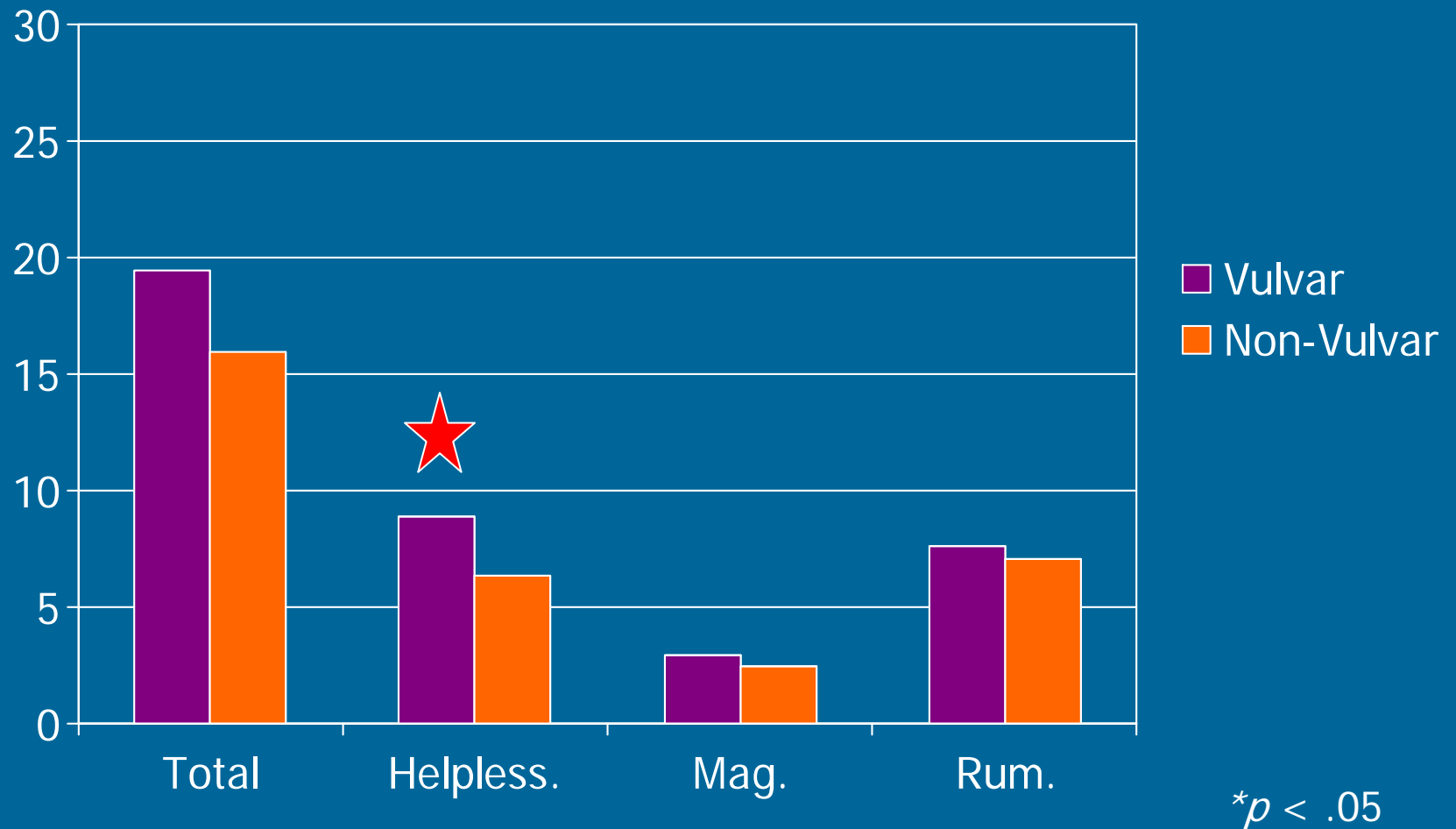
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Women with PVD:

## Vulvar vs. Non-Vulvar Pain Anxiety

- No significant differences found for vulvar vs. non-vulvar PASS-20 scores among women with PVD

# Women with PVD: Vulvar vs. Non-Vulvar Pain Catastrophizing



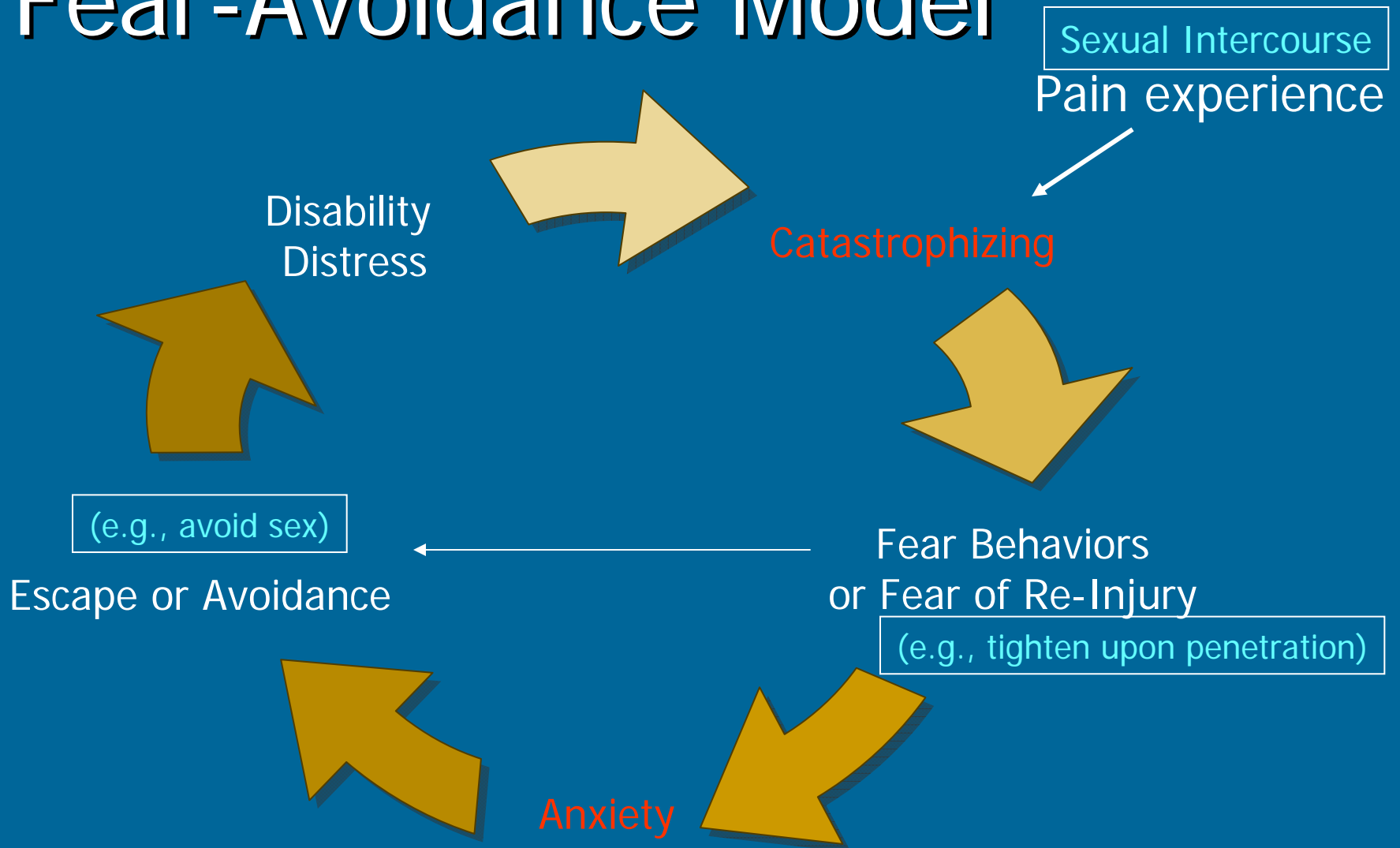
# Conclusions

- Both groups reported similar non-vulvar pain experiences
- In comparison to controls, women with PVD reported more cognitive anxiety & increased catastrophizing with regard to vulvar pain
- Women with PVD reported feeling more helpless about their vulvar vs. non-vulvar pain

# Discussion

- Implications for management
  - Previous research found CBT beneficial
- More research needed

# Fear-Avoidance Model



# Acknowledgements

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