

Broken heart, broken bones: Falls among elderly tied to depression

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(Medical Xpress) -- A new NeuRA study has found that people suffering from depression are more likely to fall, pointing to a complex relationship between mental illness, a sense of balance, and falling in older people.

Falls are a major public health issue across the world as falling is a frequent cause of [accidental death](#) in older people.

Prof Stephen Lord at [Neuroscience Research](#) Australia (NeuRA) and colleagues studied a population of people 65 years of age and older in Taiwan.

"We've known that depression and falls are connected in older people for some time, but we were never able to determine whether depression itself or anti-depressants increase the rate of falling", says Lord.

"But anti-depressants are not commonly taken by the people we studied and so for the first time we were able to measure lifestyle factors, rates of depression, and how often people fell without the effect of any depression-related medications", Lord says.

This study means that in addition to enhancing vision, strength and balance, health programs around the world designed to prevent falling in older people also need to consider mental health.

"Now we know that depression and falls are interrelated, fall prevention strategies targeting older people need to also assess and treat depression to have the maximum impact", Lord concluded.

This paper is published in the journal [Age and Ageing](#).

Provided by Neuroscience Research Australia

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