

# Mental health may play a role in dialysis patients' survival

April 5 2012

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Dialysis patients whose mental health deteriorates over time have an increased risk of developing heart problems and dying prematurely, according to a study appearing in an upcoming issue of the *Clinical Journal of the American Society Nephrology (CJASN)*. Additional research should investigate whether caring for kidney disease patients' mental health may help prevent heart complications and even death.

Research indicates that [poor mental health](#) can affect heart health. Because heart disease is the leading cause of death in [kidney disease](#) patients, Ea Wha Kang, MD, PhD (Ilsan Hospital, in Gyeonggi-do, Korea), Mark Unruh, MD (University of Pittsburgh Medical Center) and their colleagues looked to see how changes in dialysis patients' mental health relate to their heart health and longevity.

The study included 1,846 dialysis patients who were enrolled in a clinical trial called the Hemodialysis Study. The investigators assessed patients' mental health at the start of the study and each year for three years through surveys and questionnaires.

Patients who had lower mental health scores over time tended to die or be hospitalized for heart problems sooner than patients with steady or rising scores. Specifically, their survival time decreased by 5.8% and their time to first hospitalization due to heart problems decreased by 7.6%.

"Our results emphasize the link between mind and body in patients with

chronic illness and underscore the importance of attention to mental health for preventing cardiac complications and even death in [dialysis patients](#)," said Dr. Kang.

**More information:** The article, entitled "The Association of Mental Health over Time with Cardiac Outcomes in HEMO Study Patients," will appear online on April 5, 2012, [doi:10.2215/CJN.06730711](https://doi.org/10.2215/CJN.06730711)

Provided by American Society of Nephrology

Citation: Mental health may play a role in dialysis patients' survival (2012, April 5) retrieved 23 December 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-04-mental-health-role-dialysis-patients.html>

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