

Strong link found between level of depression and heart disease, stroke

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The severity of a person's depression may increase their odds of having heart disease or stroke, according to preliminary research to be presented at the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions 2019—November 16-18 in Philadelphia.

"Cardiovascular diseases are impacted by and related to a variety of aspects of health and well-being including mental health," said study author Yosef M. Khan, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H., national director of Health Informatics and Analytics for the American Heart Association in Dallas, Texas. "We found that the level of depression was strongly tied to living with [heart disease](#) and stroke, even after accounting for other factors that could impact risk, including the American Heart Association's Life's Simple 7 and variables of age, income, education, sex and race/ethnicity."

Researchers examined the connection between depression and non-fatal heart disease such as [heart failure](#), [coronary heart disease](#), angina, heart attack or stroke in U.S. adults age 20 years and older. Using depression questionnaires completed

in National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES), more than 11,000 adults diagnosed with depression were identified. This represents 231 million adults in the general population. Of these, about 1,200 people (translated to 20 million in the general population) said they had been diagnosed with heart disease or stroke.

An analysis to quantify the link for depression and non-fatal heart disease and stroke found that the odds increased by 24% with each additional level increase of depression—mild, moderate, moderately severe or severe.

"The implications of such an increase are vast," Khan said. "By understanding the relationship and degree of impact we can properly identify, prevent, treat and create policies and strategies to help decrease cardiovascular diseases and improve lives by tackling [mental health](#) and heart disease together."

More studies are needed to determine if depression causes [cardiovascular disease](#) or cardiovascular disease causes depression, according to the authors.

Provided by American Heart Association

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