

Risk of heart disease in women with diabetes and depression

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Depression and diabetes appear to be associated with a significantly increased risk of death from heart disease and risk of death from all causes over a six-year period for women, according to new research. The report followed a study in which researchers examined 78,282 women aged 54 to 79 in 2000 who were participating in the Nurses' Health Study.

They were classified as having depression if they were diagnosed with the condition, were treated with antidepressant medications or scored high on an index measuring depressive symptoms. Reports of type II diabetes were confirmed using a supplementary questionnaire.

During six years of follow-up, some 4,654 of the women died, including 979 who died from cardiovascular disease (CVD).

Compared with women who did not have either condition, those with depression had a 44 per cent increased risk of death, those with diabetes had a 35 per cent increased risk of death and those with both had approximately twice the risk. When considering only deaths from CVD, women with diabetes had a 67 per cent increased risk, women with depression had a 37 per cent increased risk and those with both had a 2.7-fold increased risk.

"The underlying mechanisms of the increased mortality risk associated with depression in patients with diabetes remains to be elucidated," the authors wrote. "It is generally suggested that depression is associated with poor glycaemic control, an increased risk of diabetes complications, poor adherence to diabetes management by patients and isolation from the social network."

In addition, diabetes and depression are both linked to smoking, poor diet and a sedentary lifestyle, and depression could trigger changes in the nervous system that adversely affect the heart, the researchers added.

"Considering the size of the population that could be affected by these two prevalent disorders, further consideration is required to design strategies aimed to provide adequate psychological management and support," the authors concluded.