

## Positive results for seniors with anxiety and depression in 'Aging Wisely' study

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With the number of ageing adults set to expand to a quarter of the population by 2050, the problems of anxiety and low mood – already common in older adults – pose a serious public health challenge in the future.

Research now indicates that up to 50 per cent of [older adults](#) experience at least some symptoms of [anxiety](#) or low [mood](#)/depression. However, when they occur together, outcomes in physical and mental health and wellbeing have more far-reaching consequences than when they occur separately and can lead to risk of suicide, death, disability, medication use and dementia.

The Ageing Wisely treatment program, run by Macquarie University's Centre for Emotional Health, has been conducting research as well as teaching older adults how to combat feelings of fatigue, loneliness, sadness and anxiety. Similar programs already teach coping strategies to children and younger adults, but until now, little research had examined whether the same skills are beneficial to older adults (over 60 years old).

The results from a randomised control trial run over the past two years reveal that teaching older adults the cognitive and behavioural skills to manage these feelings led to significant improvement in both anxiety and low mood in the study participants who completed the group treatment program.

Most significantly, the study demonstrated conclusively that both anxiety

and low mood can be reduced simultaneously in older adults and significantly improve their general wellbeing. Follow up of study participants three months later showed that their treatment gains were long lasting.

“The success of this treatment trial is uplifting as we now know that older adults can benefit from psychological treatment, and that they no longer need to accept worry, low mood and loneliness as a normal part of ageing,” said Dr. Viviana Wuthrich who lead the study.

Even with such positive results, research into the nature of anxiety and low mood continues and volunteers are needed for further studies. Researchers are seeking happy and healthy volunteers as well as those experiencing problems with anxiety and low mood, to participate in experimental research tasks such as completing computer tasks and questionnaires.

Provided by Macquarie University

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