

People with mental illness receive inadequate mass screening for prevention of medical conditions

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Dr Alex Mitchell, of the Department of Cancer Studies and Molecular Medicine at the University of Leicester, led the study which has been published in the journal *General Hospital Psychiatry*.

Dr Mitchell said preventive screening refers to population based medical tests such as mammography, colonoscopy, blood pressure testing or [cholesterol levels](#) to detect conditions such as cancer, diabetes or [heart conditions](#). These screening programmes are typically administered widely in order to help with early detection or prevention and have been credited with improving outcomes of several key medical conditions.

He said: "The research at the University of Leicester identified 26 studies worldwide that examined levels of [preventive care](#) provided to over 1.3 million individuals with versus without mental ill health diagnoses. Inferior preventive care was most apparent in those with a diagnosis of schizophrenia where there was inferior osteoporosis screening, blood pressure monitoring, vaccinations, mammography and cholesterol monitoring in 9 out of 10 studies."

Dr Mitchell, who is an honorary senior lecturer at University of Leicester, added: "We have previously identified that people with [mental health](#) diagnoses are at high risk of poorer quality of medical care for active medical conditions, we now find this extends to preventive (mass) screening.

It is concerning that people may receive inferior preventive care as a result of having mental health difficulties, past or present. Whilst this is sometimes related to low attendance, it also appears to be caused by inequalities in the offer of care from healthcare professionals. Given those with mental ill health are often at high risk of [medical complications](#), offers of preventive care should ideally be enhanced, not equal or inferior in this group".

Given these findings relate to care provided by medical staff in primary care and hospital care, Dr Mitchell's team are now examining whether medical care provided by mental health professionals is satisfactory.

More information: Lord O, Malone D, Mitchell AJ. Receipt of preventive medical care and medical screening for patients with mental illness: a comparative analysis. *Gen Hosp Psychiatry*. 2010 Sep-Oct;32(5):519-43

Provided by University of Leicester

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