

Should your surname carry a health warning?

December 12 2013

Patients named Brady could be at an increased risk of requiring a pacemaker compared with the general population, say researchers in a paper published in the Christmas edition of *The BMJ* this week.

"Nominative determinism" describes how certain people are more likely to choose a profession because of the influence of their surname with a study by Pelham et al concluding that people have a preference for things "that are connected to the self" and are disproportionately more likely to find careers whose "label is closely related to their name".

Researchers from Dublin wanted to discover whether a person's name might influence their health. They therefore looked at whether people with the surname "Brady" had a higher incidence of bradycardia (slow heart rate) and "whether they were Brady by name and brady by nature".

Researchers used data from a hospital database and the percentage of the population with the surname Brady was determined through use of online telephone listings in Dublin, Ireland, between 2007 and 2013.

There were 579 Bradys listed in total and 1012 pacemakers were fitted during this time. The [median age](#) of [patients](#) was 77. Eight (0.8%) devices were implanted in patients named Brady. The proportion of pacemaker recipients among Bradys (1.38%) was significantly higher than among non-Bradys (0.61%).

The [researchers](#) say this is the first study to demonstrate a link between

people's names and their health and say that the link between the name "Brady" and bradycardia could be due to heritage and "familial genetic disposition".

They add that the increased "Brady bradyphenomenon" could be attributable to increased levels of bradykinin, which in some animal studies has shown to decrease [heart rate](#).

The researchers conclude that the influence of a person's name can determine aspects of their health and urge further research which could look at whether there are increased rate of obesity in Fatt family or depression in the Lowe family, for example. They say these findings may have a significant role in public health medicine and "name-specific screening programmes could be developed for at-risk families".

Provided by British Medical Journal

Citation: Should your surname carry a health warning? (2013, December 12) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-12-surname-health.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--