

Mental health may affect chances against cancer

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(HealthDay)—Anxiety and depression may increase the risk of death

from certain cancers, early research suggests.

After analyzing studies involving thousands of patients in Great Britain, researchers found that people with greater levels of [psychological distress](#) had higher death rates for colon, esophageal, pancreatic and [prostate cancers](#) and leukemia.

The study was published Jan. 25 in the *BMJ*.

"Our findings contribute to the evidence that [poor mental health](#) might have some predictive capacity for certain physical diseases, but we are a long way off from knowing if these relationships are truly causal," said researcher David Batty in a journal news release.

Batty is with University College London.

He and his colleagues reviewed 16 English and Scottish studies that included more than 163,000 people, aged 16 and older. The people were initially cancer-free and followed for an average of nearly 10 years. During that time, there were 4,353 deaths from cancer.

The researchers said the findings held up even after compensating for factors such as age, sex, education, wealth, body fat, smoking and alcohol use.

Because this was an observational study, no firm conclusions about cause and effect can be made. However, the results add to increasing evidence that mental distress could be linked to certain health problems, the researchers said.

More information: Mental Health America offers [tips on staying mentally well](#).

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