

Predicting long-term cognitive decline following delirium

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Evidence suggests that experiencing delirium after surgery can lead to long-term cognitive decline in older adults. However, not everyone who experiences delirium will suffer this fate. After a recent study, researchers at Hebrew SeniorLife's Institute for Aging Research and Brigham and Women's Channing Division of Network Medicine (both Harvard Medical School affiliates) have discovered that we can predict cognitive decline after postoperative delirium using pre-surgery information from patients, particularly information on pre-surgery cognitive function.

The study, which was published today in the *Journal of Gerontology: Medical Sciences*, was only an initial look at this issue, however scientists say this is the first step in identifying causes for cognitive decline after [delirium](#). Delirium, an acute state of confusion, is a common condition affecting up to 50% of hospitalized [older adults](#), which not only leads to cognitive impairment, but can also lead to institutionalization and even death. Those study participants who scored higher on cognitive function tests prior to developing delirium were less likely to experience cognitive decline after delirium than those who scored lower.

"Predicting who is likely to develop long-term [cognitive decline](#) following delirium is highly important clinically and this study reinforces the need for strategies to prevent delirium following surgery in vulnerable older adults" said Dr. Sharon Inouye, Senior author for the study and Director of Hebrew SeniorLife's Aging Brain Center at the Institute for Aging Research. Dr. Elizabeth Devore from the Channing

Division of Network Medicine, Brigham and Women's Hospital and Dr. Richard Jones from Brown University were the first and senior authors on the study.

Provided by Hebrew SeniorLife Institute for Aging Research

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