Happiness can affect physical health

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Credit: Bill Kuffrey/public domain

A new review indicates that subjective well-being—factors such as life satisfaction and enjoyment of life—can influence physical health. The review's investigators also examine why this is so and conditions where it is most likely to occur.

Subjective well-being may exert its effects on physical health through health behaviors, as well as through the immune and cardiovascular systems. Although scientists still are exploring and debating when

happiness most affects health, there is no doubt that it can do so.

With more research, it may one day be informative for clinicians to monitor individuals' subjective well-being just as other factors are currently assessed. Individuals should also take responsibility for their health by developing happy mental habits.

"We now have to take very seriously the finding that happy people are healthier and live longer, and that chronic unhappiness can be a true health threat. People's feelings of well-being join other known factors for health, such as not smoking and getting exercise," said Prof. Ed Diener, co-author of the *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being* article. "Scores of studies show that our levels of happiness versus stress and depression can influence our cardiovascular health, our immune system strength to fight off diseases, and our ability to heal from injuries."

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