

Health check can spot psychologically vulnerable persons

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If mental health was made part of a health check, then it would be possible to detect vulnerable people who have not received assistance from doctors or psychologists for their psychological problems. This is shown by a new study from Aarhus University.

People with [mental health problems](#) would be more easily identified if standard health checks, in addition to taking blood pressure, cholesterol level and waist measurement, also focused on mental health. The researchers evaluated a health-promoting initiative for 30- to 49-year-old people in Randers Municipality called Check Your Health. The study shows that 9 percent of almost 5,000 people who were given a health check were psychologically vulnerable. More than half of them had not received help for their psychological problems from medical doctors or psychologists within the last year.

Physicians measured subjects' height, weight, [blood pressure](#) and blood sugar, and administered a questionnaire about health habits and about how subjects assessed their health. "The study has found many people who have not received help for their psychological problems. This suggests that the health check can identify a group who do not receive the help they need," explains PhD student Christine Geyti from the Section for General Medical Practice at the Department of Public Health, Aarhus University, who is behind the study. The results have just been published in *Preventive Medicine Reports*.

The study also shows that a large proportion of people with [poor mental](#)

[health](#) have completed less education, have low income, and often live alone; they are also less likely to receive help for their [psychological problems](#). "Not everyone with poor mental health needs medical or psychological help, but by making these people and the general practitioner aware of the fact that there may be a problem, we can more easily prevent this from developing into a regular need for treatment," explains the researcher.

General practitioners can combine the results with their knowledge of their patients' general resources and thereby target the most vulnerable people. "The study can contribute to considering whether we should include a target for [mental health](#) in future health checks," says Christine Geyti.

The cohort study was based on 9,767 randomly selected citizens aged 30 to 49 who were invited to a health check in Randers Municipality between 2012-14. A total of 4,871 (50 percent) participated in the study, and 49 percent of the participants were men.

The article "Mental [health](#) assessment in [health checks](#) of participants aged 30-49 years: A large-scale cohort study" has been published in *Preventive Medicine Reports*.

More information: Christine Geyti et al. Mental health assessment in health checks of participants aged 30–49 years: A large-scale cohort study, *Preventive Medicine Reports* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.pmedr.2017.12.011](#)

Provided by Aarhus University

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