

Money can't buy happiness, but poverty harms mental health

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People often say that money can't buy happiness; however a new collection of scientific studies published this week (Friday 27 April 2018) highlights how living in poverty can significantly harm people's

mental health.

The research, published in the journal *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, indicates that a chronic lack of money can be damaging to [people's](#) health and wellbeing – something which currently isn't widely acknowledged by [policy makers](#) and mental healthcare providers.

Edited by Dr. Jaime Delgado, Lecturer in Clinical Psychology at the University of Sheffield, the international collection of research featured in a special edition of this journal indicates that people living in poverty are more likely to develop [mental health](#) problems, which could be related to their increased exposure to adverse life events and a chronic state of unmet material and emotional needs.

The studies presented in the journal examine the relationship between social inequalities and psychological care. Together, the findings show that people living in poverty are less likely to start treatment for [mental health problems](#). Once they do start treatment, they are more likely to have ongoing mental health problems after the treatment is completed, and they face a range of material (e.g. lack of transportation) and social (e.g. stigma) barriers to accessing support. The studies also indicate that people living in poor neighbourhoods are less likely to recover from depression and anxiety symptoms after psychological treatment, compared to people from more affluent neighbourhoods.

Furthermore, research suggests that mental health practitioners often fail to recognise the role that socioeconomic factors have on their patients' wellbeing, and are therefore less able to understand their plight and to meet their needs. This may be further complicated by educational and social class disparities between professionals and patients.

Dr. Delgado, who edited the collection of research papers, said: "It's becoming clearer that poverty and [poor mental health](#) are closely

connected, but this connection is yet to be recognised by policy makers and [mental health care](#) providers.

"People living in poverty face a range of barriers when it comes to getting appropriate support for mental health problems. They often can't afford basic things like childcare support or transportation needed to get to [mental healthcare services](#). There is also still considerable stigma around mental health problems and asking for support can be very difficult, particularly for people living in poverty. What's more alarming is that [mental health services](#) working in the poorest neighbourhoods often lack funding and resources to meet the increased demand for treatment.

He added: "Money can't buy happiness, but increased funding for mental health and social care services would certainly help to enable the poorest in our society to access the help that they need."

More information: The collection of research can be accessed via: onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/17461405

Provided by University of Sheffield

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