

A depressed spouse may increase one's own cognitive decline, study finds

August 21 2018



Credit: Deamstime

Researchers at Yale School of Public Health and their scientific partners have found that having a depressed spouse can increase one's own depressive symptoms as well as cognitive decline over time in late life.

The findings are published in the *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*.

"Because [spouses](#)' emotions and intellectual activities influence each other in daily life, we expected that spouses' mental and [cognitive health](#) would also be related over time. And this is what we found," said Joan Monin, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the Yale School of Public Health.

Because previous epidemiological studies have found that spouses share many health behaviors and health conditions in late life, Monin and her co-authors were interested in whether spouses' cognitive impairment and depressive symptoms were also related. Using data from the Cardiovascular Health Study, which included 1,028 married couples age 60 and over, Monin and her team looked at associations and changes over time in spouses' depressive symptoms and 3MS scores, a common clinical measure of cognitive functioning, at three visits spanning 7 years.

It should be noted the strength of the associations between spouses' depressive symptoms and [cognitive decline](#) were relatively small in this study. For one standard deviation change in [depressive symptoms](#), the partner's [cognitive impairment](#) score increased 0.20 points. However, small partner influences over an extended period are important to document as it is possible that these influences have additive effects.

"Although we know that spouses' mental and cognitive health is related from this study, our next step is to uncover specific behaviors that may account for these spousal influences," Monin said. "These findings suggest that not only is it important to monitor, prevent, and treat mental and cognitive health problems in individuals, but also their close relationship partners."

More information: Joan K. Monin et al. Longitudinal Associations Between Cognitive Functioning and Depressive Symptoms Among Older Adult Spouses in the Cardiovascular Health Study, *The American*

Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jagp.2018.06.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jagp.2018.06.010)

Provided by Yale University

Citation: A depressed spouse may increase one's own cognitive decline, study finds (2018, August 21) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-08-depressed-spouse-cognitive-decline.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.