

Women twice as likely to suffer from severe depression after a stroke

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New research today published in the *European Journal of Neurology* has found that women are twice as likely to suffer from severe depression following a stroke than men.

The team of researchers from King's College London followed the

progress of symptoms over five years after [stroke](#) onset in 2,313 people (1,275 men and 1,038 women).

They found that 20% of women suffered from [severe depression](#) compared to 10% of men. They also found varying patterns of symptom progression; that long-term increased symptoms of [depression](#) are associated with higher mortality rates; and that initially moderate symptoms in men tend to become worse over time.

Stroke is a life-threatening [medical condition](#) that occurs when blood flow to part of the brain is blocked. An estimated one in six people worldwide will have a stroke in their lifetime and there are more than 100,000 strokes in the UK every year. Although severity and symptoms are wide-ranging, about a third of all survivors experience depression following their stroke: approximately 400,000 people in the UK today.

Patients who had their first-ever stroke between 1998 and 2016 were recruited to the study from the South London Stroke Register (SLSR) and were monitored until July 2017. Participants' mental health was assessed using the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) and cross-referenced with their physical health and socio-demographic data.

Lead author Dr. Salma Ayis from the School of Population Health & Environmental Sciences at King's College London, said: "While we cannot pinpoint exactly why depression is more common among women, it could be that women draw more of their sense of self and self-worth from their social relationships and so are more sensitive to challenges in maintaining these. Also, as women live longer, they are more exposed to loneliness, poor [physical health](#) and loss of support, all of which could lead to depression.

"What is common to both sexes is the dramatic decrease in the likelihood of survival as depression symptoms increase. We believe

therefore, that by monitoring symptoms of depression in stroke survivors and acting accordingly, clinicians may be able to provide better long-term care."

Provided by King's College London

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