

Social isolation and quarantine may have detrimental health impacts on people living with pre-existing conditions

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Social isolation and quarantine can have a detrimental impact on physical and mental health of people living with pre-existing conditions,

according to two studies being presented at the 23rd European Congress of Endocrinology (e-ECE 2021) on Wednesday 26 May.

The studies bring together research on the impact of social isolation and quarantine for people living with diabetes in the Adjara Region of Georgia, and on patients with hypocortisolism in Italy. Both studies reported that social isolation during the pandemic caused significant psychological and/or [physical distress](#) on the observed individuals.

Data from the first study revealed that the impact of quarantine on people living with diabetes in the Adjara Region caused blood pressure (BP) levels to increase in 88.2% of patients with 50% of these cases resulting in high BP hospitalization. In addition to these physical factors, increased feelings of anxiety and fear were observed on 82% of patients. In the second study, patients with hypocortisolism experienced increased anxiety and depression, associated with a dissatisfaction feeling of self and a reduced resiliency, when compared with Italian healthy controls. As these are all contributing factors to overall [health](#) deterioration, these findings suggest further research is required to allow patients with pre-existing conditions to remain fit and healthy during the current pandemic.

In the Adjara Region study, Dr. Liana Jashi and the research team disseminated an online questionnaire and collected answers from 16 endocrinologists and 22 family and general practice doctors. The study confirmed the negative, indirect effects social isolation and quarantine had on people living with diabetes. It reported a list of negative effects such as the reduced access to medical care, weight gain and increased cigarette and alcohol consumption. Physical activity decreased by 29.8%, a vital preventative to further physical and [psychological problems](#).

"This study highlights that people living with diabetes require greater

support during pandemics to maintain exercise and protect their physical and [mental health](#). National health services should use these data and future studies to implement better social care around supporting people with pre-existing conditions," said Dr. Jashi.

In the second study, Dr. Chiara Simeoli reported data collected during the last three weeks of the mass quarantine lasted 2 months in Italy, in a web-survey-based, multicenter, case-control research involving 12 different Italian centers. The study confirmed that a large cohort of 478 patients with hypocortisolism, and particularly, 363 with adrenal insufficiency and 115 with congenital adrenal hyperplasia, adequately treated with glucocorticoids, showed higher anxiety and depression, associated with a dissatisfaction feeling of self and a reduced resiliency, when compared with Italian healthy controls, suggesting the detrimental impact of social [isolation](#) on mental health of these patients, particularly frail and vulnerable to infections and stress. Moreover, patients with adrenal insufficiency reported a worse quality of life than patients with congenital adrenal hyperplasia.

"These findings confirmed that beyond the huge impact on physical health, COVID-19 epidemic, [social isolation](#) and mass quarantine represent significant psychological stressors, causing severe effects on mental health, even more on people with pre-existing conditions. An empowerment of psychological counseling for these vulnerable patients during COVID-19 should be considered by national health-care services," adds Dr. Simeoli.

Both studies indicate that additional larger studies over a longer period of time are needed for further investigation.

More information: The presentation "Psychological distress in patients with hypocortisolism during mass quarantine for Covid-19 epidemic in Italy" will be presented on Wednesday 26 May at 14:14

CET, online during e-ECE 2021. <http://www.ece2021.org>

Provided by European Society of Endocrinology

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