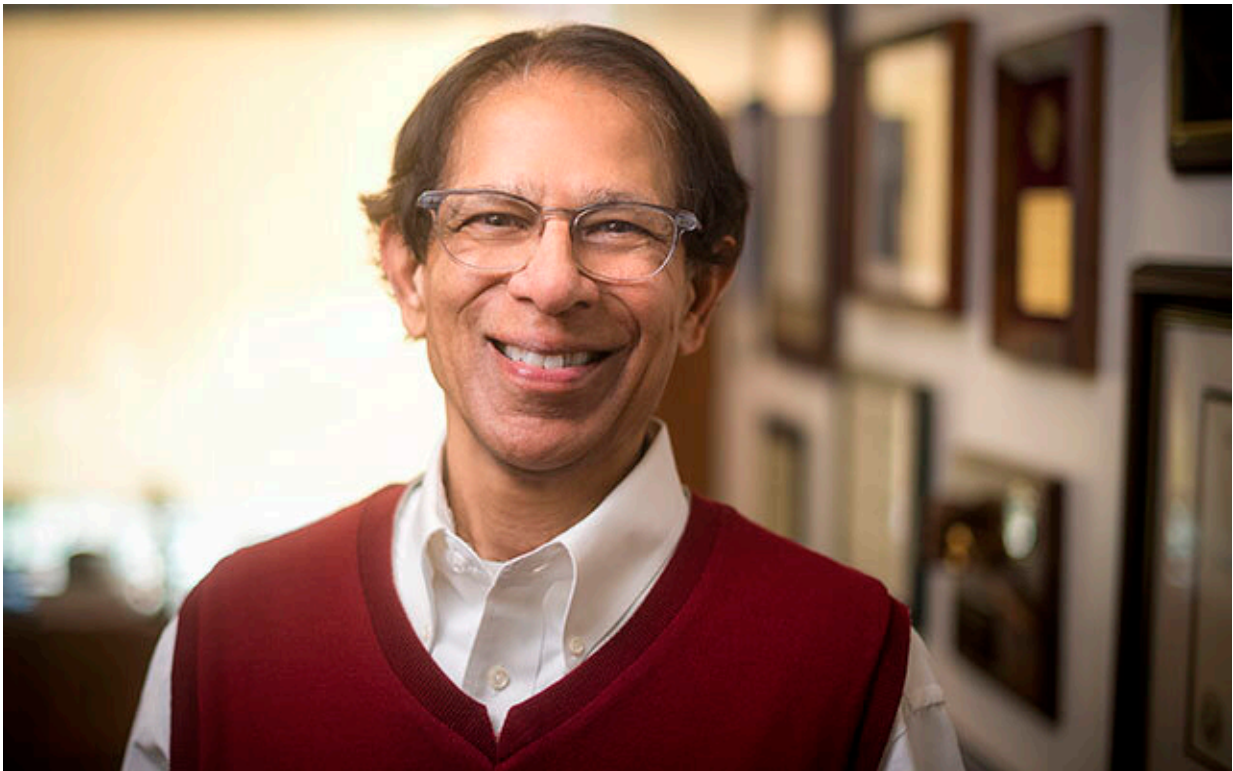


Can seven questions determine how wise you are?

December 3 2021, by Scott Lafee



Dilip V. Jeste, MD, is the senior author of the study and senior associate dean for the Center of Healthy Aging and Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry and Neurosciences at UC San Diego School of Medicine. Credit: Erik Jepsen/UCPA

Researchers at University of California San Diego School of Medicine report that an abbreviated, seven-item scale can help determine with

high validity a person's level of wisdom, a potentially modifiable personality trait that has been shown to have a strong association to well-being.

The study's researchers had previously developed the 28-item San Diego Wisdom Scale (SD-WISE-28), which has been used in large national and international studies, [biological research](#) and clinical trials to evaluate [wisdom](#).

But in a study publishing in *International Psychogeriatrics*, researchers found that a shortened seven-item version (SD-WISE-7 or Jeste-Thomas Wisdom Index), was comparable and reliable.

"Wisdom measures are increasingly being used to study factors that impact [mental health](#) and optimal aging. We wanted to test if a list of only seven items could provide valuable information to test wisdom," said senior author Dilip V. Jeste, MD, senior associate dean for the Center of Healthy Aging and Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry and Neurosciences at UC San Diego School of Medicine.

Past studies have shown that wisdom is comprised of seven components: [self-reflection](#), pro-social behaviors (such as empathy, compassion and altruism), emotional regulation, acceptance of diverse perspectives, decisiveness, social advising (such as giving rational and helpful advice to others) and spirituality.

The latest study surveyed 2,093 participants, ages 20 to 82, through the online crowdsourcing platform Amazon Mechanical Turk.

The seven statements, selected from SD-WISE-28, relate to the seven components of wisdom and are rated on a 1 to 5 scale, from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Examples of the statements include "I remain calm under pressure" and "I avoid situations where I know my help will

be needed."

"Shorter doesn't mean less valid," said Jeste. "We selected the right type of questions to get important information that not only contributes to the advancement of science but also supports our previous data that wisdom correlates with health and longevity."

Additionally, the SD-WISE-7 was found to strongly and positively correlate with resilience, happiness and mental well-being and strongly and negatively correlate with loneliness, depression and anxiety.

"There are evidence-based interventions to increase levels of specific components of wisdom, which would help reduce loneliness and promote overall well-being," said Jeste.

"Like the COVID-19 vaccine protects us from the novel coronavirus, wisdom can aid in protecting us from loneliness. Thus, we can potentially help end a behavioral pandemic of loneliness, suicides and opioid abuse that has been going on for the last 20 years."

Next steps include genetic, biological, psychosocial and cultural studies of large numbers of diverse populations to assess wisdom, as well as various factors related to mental, physical and cognitive health in people across the lifespan.

"We need wisdom for surviving and thriving in life. Now, we have a list of questions that take less than a couple of minutes to answer that can be put into clinical practice to try to help individuals," said Jeste.

More information: Abbreviated San Diego Wisdom Scale (SD-WISE-7) and Jeste-Thomas Wisdom Index (JTWI), *International Psychogeriatrics* (2021). [DOI: 10.1017/S1041610221002684](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1041610221002684)
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Provided by University of California - San Diego

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