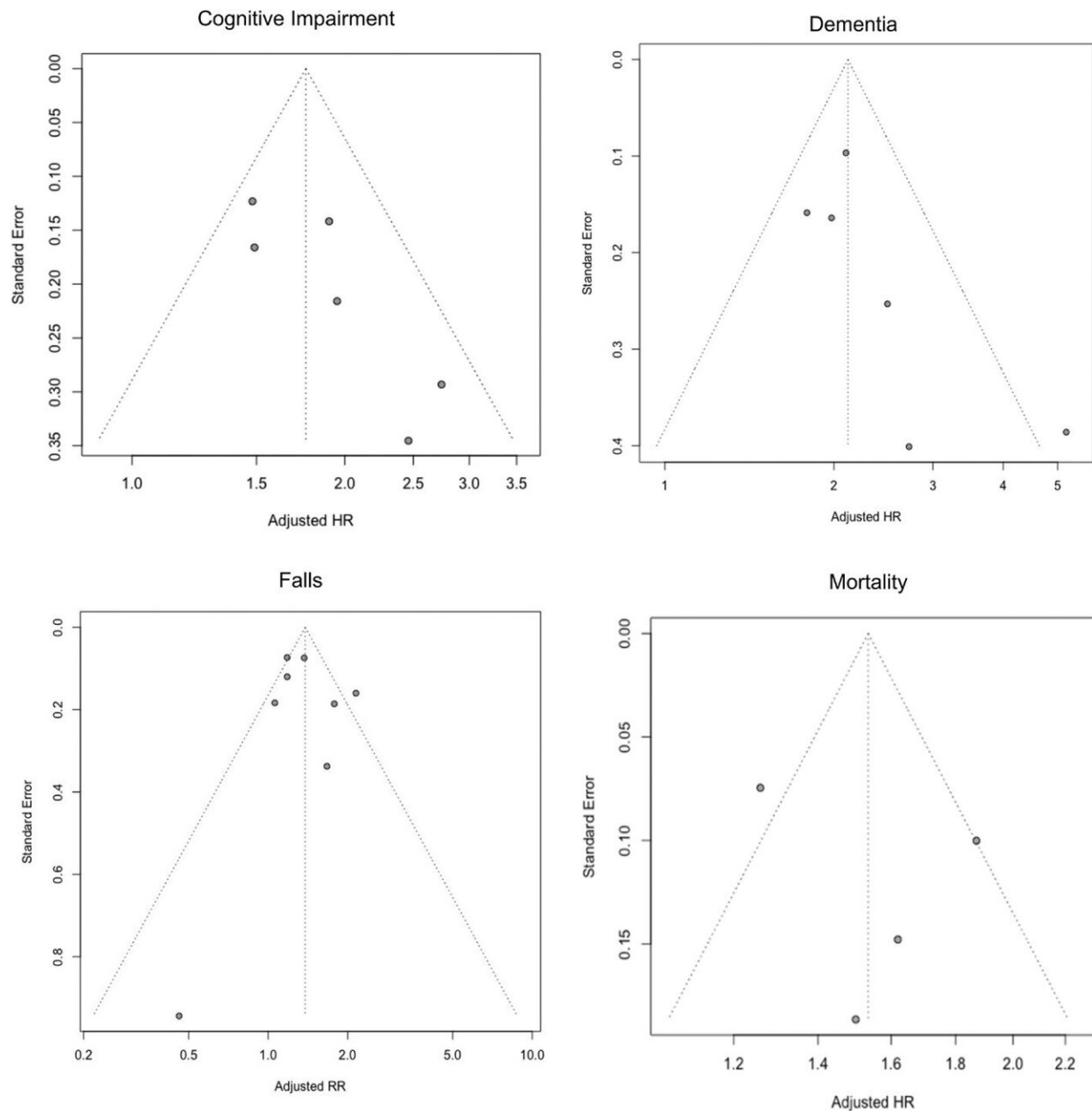


# Slow walk and memory issues may predict dementia risk

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Funnel plots of motoric cognitive risk (MCR) and each of the four outcomes from the meta-analysis. Abbreviations: HR, hazard ratio; RR, relative risk. Credit: DOI: 10.1002/alz.12547

A combination of slow walking and difficulties with memory could be associated with double the risk of developing dementia in later life, a study suggests.

People with Motoric Cognitive Risk (MCR)—a syndrome that involves slow walking speed and self-reported [memory](#) difficulties—are also at increased risk of cognitive impairment and experience higher mortality rates, experts found.

The study team from the University of Edinburgh hopes the findings will lead to walking speed being routinely assessed when patients are examined for early signs of [dementia](#).

Researchers studied the data of almost 50,000 people aged 60 years and older with MCR across 15 studies.

## Cognitive impairment

A participant met the criteria for MCR if they walked significantly slower than people of a similar age and sex, and had noticed issues with their memory.

Experts found that people with MCR were more than twice as likely to develop dementia and were at a 76 percent increased risk of [cognitive impairment](#)—trouble remembering, concentrating or learning new information—than people without MCR.

The team also found that the risk of mortality for people with MCR was 49 percent higher than those without it, and the risk of falls was 38 percent greater.

Researchers caution that because this was a pooling of observational studies, it was not possible to establish whether MCR causes these outcomes or is simply a risk factor for them.

## Huge strain

There are around 850,000 people with dementia in the UK, and this is projected to rise to 1.6 million by 2040. Globally, 50 million people live with dementia, a number that is predicted to triple in the next 30 years.

Dementia places a huge strain on patients and families, and the total cost of care for people with the condition in the UK is £34.7 billion per year.

"It is quick, cheap, and easy to check for MCR. Adding it to the assessment of people with memory problems could be a practical way to help doctors identify patients at risk of developing dementia, especially in settings with minimal or no access to the current tests used to diagnose dementia. Importantly, our findings remained after taking into account other factors such as age and education level, as well as a past history of depression, stroke or heart attacks. However, more research is required before MCR is ready for use in the clinic," says Dr. Donncha Mullin, The University of Edinburgh's Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences.

**More information:** Donncha S. Mullin et al, Mechanisms of motoric cognitive risk—Hypotheses based on a systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal cohort studies of older adults, *Alzheimer's & Dementia* (2022). [DOI: 10.1002/alz.12547](https://doi.org/10.1002/alz.12547)

Provided by University of Edinburgh

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