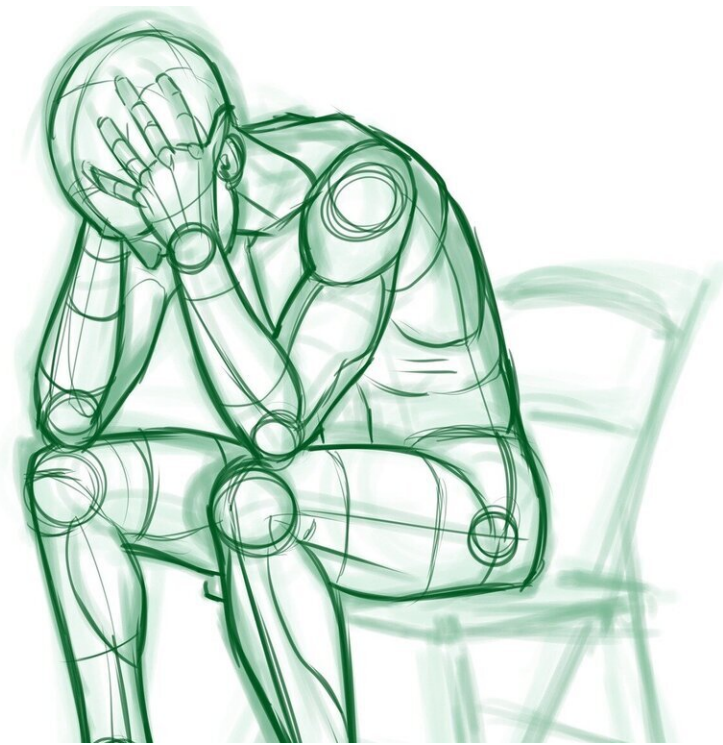


New study reveals pandemic-specific depression and anxiety among individuals with multiple sclerosis

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Kessler Foundation researchers published results of a survey of the emotional outcomes of individuals with multiple sclerosis (MS) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Comparison of data collected during the

pandemic with pre-pandemic data for the study sample suggests the occurrence of pandemic-specific depression and anxiety. Their article, "Surviving a global pandemic: The experience of depression, anxiety, and loneliness among individuals with multiple sclerosis," was published online in *Multiple Sclerosis and Related Disorders* on January 14, 2022. The authors are Lauren Strober, Ph.D., Erica Weber, Ph.D., Anthony Lequerica, Ph.D., and Nancy Chiaravalloti, Ph.D., of Kessler Foundation.

The social restrictions mandated by the COVID-19 [pandemic](#) have heightened concerns about exacerbations of pre-existing [mental health issues](#) and [loneliness](#) among vulnerable populations, such as MS. To assess the impact of the pandemic on the MS population, researchers surveyed 142 individuals who had previously reported their emotional experiences in a national online survey. Comparisons showed increases in depression, [anxiety](#), and loneliness during the pandemic, with 54% reporting 'new' depression, and 33%, 'new' anxiety. Increases in loneliness affected all people with depression and anxiety, whether [symptoms](#) were new or pre-existing.

The research team sought to differentiate individuals with new symptoms from those with pre-pandemic symptoms and no prior reported symptoms. "We found that 'new' depression and anxiety appeared to be related specifically to the pandemic," reported lead author Lauren Strober, Ph.D., senior research scientist in the Center for Neuropsychology and Neuroscience at Kessler Foundation. "Also, we saw no association with the person-specific factors commonly associated with depression and anxiety in individuals with MS, namely, personality and self-efficacy."

The findings have important implications for the treatment of mental health issues in MS. "Clinicians need to be aware of the heterogenous nature of depression and anxiety in their patients with MS, and approach

treatment accordingly," said Dr. Strober. "Individuals with new symptomatology will benefit from cognitive behavioral interventions that stress coping, positive mental health habits, and encouragement to connect with others despite the pandemic," she added, "while individuals with pre-existing symptoms may respond to those aimed at improving self-efficacy and other more fundamental factors of emotional distress."

More information: L. Strober et al, Surviving a global pandemic: The experience of depression, anxiety, and loneliness among individuals with multiple sclerosis, *Multiple Sclerosis and Related Disorders* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/j.msard.2022.103497](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.msard.2022.103497)

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