

Depressed patients less likely to take their heart medications, finds research

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Patients who feel low when having a cardiac device implanted are more likely to stop taking their heart medications than those without depression, according to research presented today at ACNAP 2023, a

scientific congress of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC).

Study author Mr. Ole Skov, a psychologist and Ph.D. student in cardiac psychology at the University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark said, "Medications help to control symptoms and prevent further heart problems so [adherence](#) is important. Patients with an [implantable cardioverter defibrillator](#) (ICD) who feel depressed or anxious should be encouraged to express their concerns, thoughts, and feelings and contact a health care professional who can screen them for distress to explore the best course of action. This could be referral to a psychologist or other measures."

An ICD implantation is recommended for people at high risk of a life-threatening arrhythmia and for those who have had a [sudden cardiac arrest](#). It is estimated that approximately one in every five patients with an ICD is affected by depression or anxiety. Both [mental health issues](#) have been linked with an elevated risk of death in those with an ICD.

Most patients with an ICD are prescribed medication to manage their [heart disease](#). Failure to take cardiac medications increases the risk of complications and death, making it crucial to identify patients who are more likely to stop taking their medication so that support measures can be initiated.

This study examined whether anxiety and depression at the time of ICD implantation are associated with medication adherence one year after receiving the device. The study was a secondary analysis of the ACQUIRE-ICD randomized controlled trial of an eHealth intervention, which enrolled patients from all six implantation centers in Denmark. Of 478 patients in the trial with an ICD or an ICD with cardiac resynchronization therapy (CRT-D), 433 (91%) were taking at least one heart medication when their device was implanted.

These included beta-blockers, ACE inhibitors, statins and diuretics. Of the 433 patients, 322 patients (74%) completed assessments of medication adherence at both baseline (implantation) and 12 months after implantation and were included in the current analyses.

Medication adherence was measured by self-report using the Morisky Medication Adherence Scale (MMAS) with scores ranging from 0 to 8. Low, medium and high adherence were defined as scores below 6, 6 to

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