

New findings on mortality of individuals with schizophrenia

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A new study from Lund University in Sweden shows that the average life expectancy of men and women with schizophrenia is 15 years and 12 years shorter respectively than for those who do not suffer from the disease. The study has been carried out in collaboration with Stanford University in the US.

The reasons why people with schizophrenia have a shorter life expectancy have previously been unknown, but have been much discussed in recent years. The research report that has now been published shows that individuals with schizophrenia are more likely to die of two major diseases.

The study followed over six million individuals from 2003 to 2009, of whom 8 277 had schizophrenia, by analysing the Swedish population and health registers.

The results show that people with schizophrenia had contact with the health service over twice as often as people without the condition, but they were no more likely to be diagnosed with [cardiovascular disease](#) or cancer.

"Yet we saw an opposing pattern of [death](#) from these diseases. It is clear that the health service is failing to diagnose cardiovascular disease and cancer in these patients", says Jan Sundquist, [general practitioner](#) and professor at the Centre for [Primary Health Care](#) Research at Lund University.

Women with schizophrenia were 3.3 times more likely to die of cardiovascular disease and men 2.2 times more likely. Women with schizophrenia were 1.7 times more likely to die of cancer while men were 1.4 times more likely, compared with those without schizophrenia. Only 26.3% of the men with schizophrenia who died of cardiovascular disease had been diagnosed before their deaths, compared with 43.7% of the men who did not have [schizophrenia](#).

"It is unacceptable that such a vulnerable group of people, who also have extensive documented contact with the health service, should die prematurely of conditions such as cardiovascular disease and cancer – diseases that should be preventable", says Professor Sundquist. "A much greater degree of diagnostic and preventive measures could be put in place for this vulnerable group in our society."

More information: Casey Crump, MD, PhD; Marilyn A. Winkleby, PhD; Kristina Sundquist, MD, PhD; Jan Sundquist, MD, PhD, 'Comorbidities and Mortality in Persons with Schizophrenia: A Swedish National Cohort Study'. *Am J Psychiatry* 2013; [DOI: 10.1176/appi.ajp.2012.12050599](#)

Provided by Lund University

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