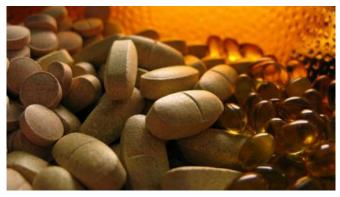


Vitamin D and depression links debunked

2 March 2015, by Lizzie Thelwell



The link between vitamin D and depression in older men has been analysed by UWA researchers

Vitamin D deficiency does not cause depression in later life but may be a marker for depression, a local study suggests.

Professor Osvaldo Almeida from the School of Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences at the University of Western Australia says there has, to date, been evidence suggesting vitamin D deficiency has some part in the causation of depression.

"We now know that the brain has numerous people who have concentreceptors for vitamin D, which would suggest that it does play a role in modulating some aspect of brain function," Professor Almeida says.

"Health practitioners nee

"So, the possibility that low vitamin D could cause depression seems biologically plausible.

"However, our findings indicate that this association is most likely due to reverse causality, meaning that a low concentration of vitamin D is a consequence of depression because people with depression move less and are less exposed to sun light."

Consistent with this hypothesis, Professor Almeida and his colleagues found that a low concentration

of vitamin D was associated with current depression, but not with past or future depression.

"These results suggest that the low concentration of vitamin D in older people with depression is simply a marker of depressive state, not the cause of it," Professor Almeida says,

Researchers analysed the plasma concentration of vitamin D in 3105 men aged 71 to 88 years from the Perth metropolitan area. All had a history of depression or were currently experiencing depression.

They questioned the men and used administrative health data to identify past depression. A Geriatric Depression Scale score established the presence of current depression.

The study reported retrospective, cross-sectional and prospective associations between vitamin D concentration and depressed mood in this sample.

Professor Almeida says their results suggest health practitioners should refrain from prescribing vitamin D supplementation for the treatment of <u>depression</u>.

"Vitamin D is often prescribed for people with osteoporosis, those who are at risk of falls and for people who have concentrations under 50 nmol/L," Professor Almeida says.

"Health practitioners need to be cautious because there is evidence that excess vitamin D may cause more harm than good.

"For example, a large Australian trial showed that its use increases the risk of falls and fractures."

Researchers did not dismiss the possibility that vitamin D can have a very small antidepressant effect, but suggest large randomised placebocontrolled trials be conducted to dismiss or establish with certainty a causal link.

More information: "Vitamin D concentration and



its association with past, current and future depression in older men: The Health In Men Study" DOI: dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.maturitas.2015.01.016

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