

Media Release



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Australian research on heart disease and depression

People with depression could be at greater risk of heart disease, according to an international research team led by a Charles Sturt University researcher.

Dr Robert Grenfell, National Clinical Issues Director at the National Heart Foundation of Australia, said the study confirmed the importance of treating depression to avoid heart disease.

“We know that depression, social isolation and lack of quality support is a key risk factor for cardiovascular disease and this study confirms the importance of us treating it in its early stages,” he said.

More than 46,000 Australians die each year from cardiovascular disease, Australia’s number one killer.

The study found that depression seemed to change the way heart rate is controlled, which increases the risk of heart attack. The authors also found that diabetes seemed to worsen the risk of cardiac arrest in people with depression.

“Mild depression is associated with doubling the risk of developing cardiovascular disease and heart attack (and death from these causes), and severe depression has an even more profound effect - with up to five times the rate of cardiovascular disease as compared to non-depressed people,” Dr Grenfell said.

“Unfortunately, evidence from large studies where depression appears to be adequately treated, have not shown any reversal, or improvement in the cardiovascular disease risk

“Therefore the best option is to treat depression in its early stages,” he said.

Those suffering from depression are reminded that it can be treated with medical and non-medical therapies. The Heart Foundation encourages anyone concerned about depression to call their health professional as a first step.

More information on the risk factors for cardiovascular disease is available at the Heart Foundation website. <http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/your-heart/know-the-risks/Pages/default.aspx>

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