

Singapore finds link between hearing, vision loss and mortality

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Hearing loss affects 1 in 5 people globally, a phenomenon that is increasingly common as populations around the world start to age at a faster rate



A team from the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine at the National University of Singapore (NUS Medicine) has found that people who suffer from hearing loss have 13% and 28% increased risk of all-cause and cardiovascular death respectively, from 26 observational studies that comprised over 1.2 million participants.

It was found that people with both hearing and vision loss have a 40% and 86% increased risk of an all-cause and cardiovascular death respectively.

Compared to vision loss and other long-term chronic illnesses, hearing loss has not received as much priority and attention, as it is harder for family members and patients themselves to detect the gradual and subtle decline in hearing. It is easy to make the connection that hearing loss increase the risk of death from traffic accidents and workplace injuries.

However, through their research, the NUS Medicine team found that cardiovascular death occurred at a faster rate in people suffering from hearing loss, after taking into account age, sex, socioeconomic status and lifestyle habits such as smoking and alcohol use, and chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, heart diseases, cognitive impairment and stroke.

The possible explanation that people with hearing loss have a higher risk of cardiovascular deaths may be because of the increased stress, anxiety and depression, which can worsen heart conditions.

Another possible explanation is that hearing loss may also worsen physical frailty which results in decreased body reserves, in turn increasing vulnerability to external stressors that trigger cardiovascular death.