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Project Title

Cognitive aging and dementia risk in sexual minority women

Project Summary

Women bear the greatest burden of Alzheimer's disease and chronic stress further increases the risk of pathological aging. Past research on health outcomes in sexual minority (lesbian, gay, bisexual) cohorts shows that sexual minority individuals report worse mental and physical health outcomes as well as higher rates of disability and lower social support than heterosexuals. All these factors may contribute to accelerated cognitive aging and an increased risk of late life dementia. To better understand the cognitive consequences of sexual minority stress, the current study compares cognitive outcomes in sexual minority women with those in age-matched heterosexual women. Rates of subjective cognitive decline as well as performance on a range of cognitive tests will be analyzed, and the effects of physical health and mental health (as risk factors) as well as social support (as a resilience factor) on the relationship between sexual minority status and cognition will be examined.

Keywords

Cognition, Minority stress, Aging, Cognitive aging, Dementia risk