

Applicant

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Project Title

A Cross-sectional Study of the Relationships Between Social Networks, Loneliness and All-cause Mortality in Those Over 45 Years of Age.

Project Summary

Social relationships have been found to influence an individual's health. Social isolation has been found to exacerbate the negative effects of poverty on health, and loneliness has been associated with morbidity and mortality. Although indelibly these concepts are related, they are in fact distinct constructs and may or may not occur concurrently - for example, it is possible to feel lonely in a crowd. A number of possible mechanisms have been proposed to explain the association between loneliness and morbidity - we are interested in its relationship with cognitive decline (and ultimately the association with dementia). At present, the public health challenge posed by poorer social networks, social isolation and loneliness remain uncertain. Using a population-based study of older Canadians, we aim to explore the different types of social network, evaluate which of these have the greatest influence on loneliness, and understand how this affects cognitive functioning.

Keywords

Social networks; Loneliness; Isolation; Support; Cognitive decline