

Research Review

The Deadly Combination of Diabetes and Depression

A study published in the June 2005 issue of the ADA journal, *Diabetes Care*, examined the long-term effects of diabetes and depression on mortality. More than 10,000 adults were studied. The study participants fell into one of four groups, those who had: 1) neither diabetes nor depression, 2) depression but no diabetes, 3) diabetes but no depression, or 4) both diabetes and depression. After 8 years, the researchers examined how many people in each of the four groups had died.

The results showed that, whether you had diabetes or not, depression raised the risk of mortality over the 8-year period. Diabetes, whether you were depressed or not, also raised the risk of mortality. Most importantly, it was the *combination* of depression and diabetes that raised the risk the most. People who had diabetes and were significantly depressed were 2½ times more likely to die over the 8-year period compared to people who had neither condition. Comparing people with diabetes who were depressed vs. people with diabetes who were not depressed, the researchers reported that depression increased the risk of mortality by 30%.

IMPLICATIONS. These findings point to a powerful and worrisome relationship. Without a doubt, depression makes living with diabetes harder. In addition, these findings are consistent with the results from previous studies that have shown depression to have a potent negative influence on the health of people with diabetes. Depression has been linked to poorer blood glucose control, poorer diabetes self-care, increased risk of long-term complications and higher health care costs. While no one is quite certain how depression might be contributing to higher rates of mortality, the message is clear: for people with diabetes, depression will not only lower the *quality* of your life, it may have a similar effect on the *quantity* of your life.

GOOD NEWS. Standard treatments for depression, including antidepressant medications and certain forms of brief counseling, have been shown to be effective in helping people with diabetes to recover from depression. It seems likely that such treatments, especially if they also address people's negative feelings about diabetes, should also help people to manage their diabetes more effectively, improve their health over the long-term and—perhaps—even live longer to boot. Therefore, if you are significantly depressed, talk to your doctor as soon as possible about getting the help you need.

If you are in the San Diego area, please note that the BDI offers an introductory workshop called "*Feeling Good Again - Step 1*" and a 6-week program ("*Feeling Good Again - Step 2*") that addresses this serious combination: "***Defeating the Diabetes/Depression Connection***". Please visit our website www.behavioraldiabetes.org for details.

Source: Egede LF, Nietert PJ and Zheng D (2005). Depression and all-cause and coronary heart disease mortality among adults with and without diabetes. *Diabetes Care*, 28: 1339 – 1345.