

Prolonged use of acid reflux medication linked to higher dementia risk

Proton-pump inhibitors (PPIs), which are commonly prescribed to manage conditions like acid reflux and stomach ulcers, have been a subject of concern regarding their potential link to an increased risk of dementia. However, research on this topic has produced mixed results.

In a recent study published in the *Neurology* journal, scientists aimed to investigate whether the use of PPIs was associated with the development of dementia. The study began in 1987–1989 and tracked these individuals over time. Importantly, they only included participants who did not have dementia at a later stage of the study, which occurred between 2011 and 2013.

To determine PPI usage, the researchers relied on visual records and participants' reports of their medication history during phone calls. They also



considered the cumulative exposure to PPIs, which took into account the number of years a person had been using these medications before the later stage of the study. Incident dementia cases were identified through various means, such as in-person assessments, phone-based cognitive tests, hospital records, and death certificates.

The study involved 5,712 participants, with an average age of 75 years. After a follow-up period of six years, about 10% of them developed dementia. The analysis revealed that, overall, there was no significant difference in dementia risk between those who used PPIs and those who did not.

However, there was an interesting discovery: individuals who had been using PPIs for more than 4.4 years had a slightly higher risk of dementia (33% higher) compared to those who had not used PPIs. This suggests that long-term use of these medications might warrant closer monitoring and consideration of potential risks.

Promoting patient engagement for safer healthcare

STAR HEALTH DESK

Patient and family engagement stands as a cornerstone strategy in the ongoing efforts to advance safety in healthcare. With their unique perspectives stemming from firsthand experiences throughout the entire patient journey, patients, families, and carers offer invaluable insights to enhance patient safety.

The impact of meaningful patient engagement is nothing short of remarkable, with studies indicating



a potential reduction in harm by up to 15%. This translates to saving countless lives and billions of dollars each year. Consequently, patient and family engagement has been firmly embedded as a fundamental principle in the World Health Assembly resolution (WHA72.6) on global action on patient safety and in the Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021–2030.

September 17, 2023 is observed as World Patient Safety Day. This year's slogan *"Elevate the voice of patients"* highlights the theme of World Patient Safety Day 2023, which is *"Engaging patients for patient safety."* This annual event carries a significant message. It aims to influence a wide range of stakeholders, including patients, families, policymakers, healthcare leaders, health workers, and patient organisations, to collaboratively work towards co-designing healthcare policies and safety interventions that genuinely reflect the needs and preferences of patients. Ultimately, this endeavour aims to enhance healthcare safety on a global scale.

Evidence underscores the transformative impact of treating patients as active partners in their care. When patients are actively involved in decisions about their health, there are significant improvements in safety, patient

satisfaction, and health outcomes.

By assuming an active role within the healthcare team, patients can contribute not only to the safety of their own care but also to the overall safety of the healthcare system. Through the slogan "Elevate the voice of patients!", the World Health Organisation (WHO) issues a compelling call to action. It urges all stakeholders to take essential steps to ensure patients' involvement in policy formulation, representation in governance structures, engagement in co-designing safety strategies, and active participation in their own care.

The World Patient Safety Day pursues several key objectives:



1. Raise global awareness regarding the imperative need for active engagement of patients, their families, and carers across all healthcare settings and at all levels to enhance patient safety.

2. Engage policy-makers, healthcare leaders, healthcare workers, patient organisations, civil society, and other stakeholders in

concerted efforts to engage patients and families in the formulation of policies and practices for safe healthcare.

3. Empower patients and families to take an active role in their healthcare and contribute to improving healthcare safety.

4. Advocate for urgent action on patient and family engagement in alignment with the Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021–2030, involving all relevant partners.

The global campaign for World Patient Safety Day 2023 encompasses a diverse array of activities for all stakeholders, taking place on and

around September 17. These activities include national campaigns, policy forums, advocacy and technical events, capacity-building initiatives, and the iconic lighting up of monuments, landmarks, and public spaces in the signature colour orange, symbolising the campaign.

Source: World Health Organisation



HAVE A NICE DAY

STOICISM

embracing kindness & compassion in a philosophy of virtue - Part I



DR RUBAIUL MURSHED

Stoicism teaches one to be altruistic, helping others without desire for personal gain or recognition. Since we were, in fact, created for it by nature, it is about doing it naturally. It is our function to benefit the species into which

we were born. Stoicism advises us to be altruistic, acting in the service of others without desire for personal gain, recognition, or praise. Since we were, in fact, created for it by nature, it is about doing it naturally. It is our function to benefit the species into which we were born.

What do the Stoics say about kindness? Showing kindness is not a weakness; it is a strength. In fact, being kind to another person is sometimes even more difficult than doing the opposite. Stoics believe that we should even show kindness to those who are rude to us or who we feel aversion towards.

A couple summers ago, I was reading Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* on a plane ride back from Africa.

"What are you reading?" said the man next to me.

"*Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius," I responded.

"Oh, that is neat. Do you like it? I am not really into all that meditation stuff."

I explained that it was a notebook of the Roman emperor's personal reflections as well as a foundational stoic text.

"Stoicism, huh? Isn't that like being very shut off emotionally?" He pointed to the cover, boasting a marble statue of Marcus Aurelius.

"I do not think I could be like that. Or I don't think I would want to. I have got too much heart."

"Too much heart?"

"Yeah, I am just a pretty caring person. I would not want to change that about myself." It is a philosophy of life that maximises positive emotions, reduces negative emotions, and helps individuals hone their virtues of character.

E-mail: rubaiulmurshed@shomman.org

Prevention and control of NCDs mark the kick-off of the Global Week for Action

STAR HEALTH REPORT

On September 13, 2023, in Geneva, Switzerland, the World Health Organisation (WHO) announced the forthcoming launch of a significant report titled "Global mapping report on multisectoral action to strengthen the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases and mental health conditions." This report, showcasing experiences from various regions across the globe, will be officially unveiled during an online event co-organised by the World Diabetes Foundation (WDF) and the NCD Alliance (NCDA).

The release of the report coincides with the commencement of the Global week for action on noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), scheduled to begin on September 14. This global initiative aims to unite civil society organisations worldwide in a collective call to governments for the universal accessibility of high-quality healthcare, regardless of individuals' financial means, geographic location, or background. Central to this plea is comprehensive care for noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

The report itself serves as an informative overview of the implementation of multisectoral actions designed to combat the burden of NCDs and mental health conditions. It sheds light on successful actions taken across various sectors and emphasises the need for the development and widespread implementation of additional initiatives. For those interested in delving deeper into these multisectoral efforts, an interactive repository is available on the WHO Knowledge Action Portal dedicated to NCDs.

Alarming statistics

underscore the urgency of this effort. More than 20 percent of the world's population, totaling eight billion people, lives with at least one NCD, which includes conditions like cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. Annually, NCDs are responsible for 41 million deaths and push millions of households into poverty. Projections indicate that by 2030, NCD-related deaths could surge to 52 million annually, placing a substantial burden on communities and healthcare systems. Factors such as unhealthy diets, tobacco use, alcohol consumption, and air pollution contribute to this escalating



crisis.

To explore the experiences of different countries highlighted in the report, an online event titled *"Towards achieving Universal Health Coverage: multistakeholder gathering on tackling noncommunicable diseases"* took place on September 14.

Presently, over half of the global population lacks full access to essential health services, with the majority residing in low- and middle-income countries. The urgency of addressing these disparities underscores the importance of the Global Week for Action on NCDs and the invaluable insights provided by the WHO's new report.



Is back pain linked to mental health?

DR MOHAMMAD ALI

In the past, understanding that the mind could suffer like the body posed a challenge for society's common man. However, times have changed, and people are now giving due importance to mental health, ushering in a new era of effective mental illness treatment.

The human brain possesses a remarkable ability to remember the pain patterns associated with a back injury or disc prolapse. This memory is influenced by both natural and environmental factors. For instance, if someone harbours a particularly negative attitude towards back pain or if the individual with back pain faces stress due to socio-economic or familial factors, the combination of physical back pain and mental anguish can leave a lasting scar in the mind, influencing the perception of pain in the body for years. This type of back pain shares similarities with a condition known as fibromyalgia.

Undoubtedly, dispelling mental pain when it manifests in the body poses significant challenges. Firstly, patients of this kind must be provided with accurate information.

Secondly, they require targeted and specialised treatment, which could include therapeutic exercises, advice, or other interventions. The idea that Prolapsed Lumbar Intervertebral Disc (PLID) is the primary cause of back pain is widespread among patients.

However, this is largely untrue. Rigorous studies have demonstrated that thousands of healthy individuals have been diagnosed with PLID through MRI but do not experience back pain. Similarly, many low back pain patients exhibit normal MRIs. Therefore, the first step for patients is to seek correct information and treatment.

The writer is a lower back pain researcher at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia. E-mail: hprc2005@live.com

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