



From infection to memory loss? New study sparks concern

Severe infections may quietly raise the risk of dementia later in life, a new study suggests, highlighting an often-overlooked link between physical illness and brain health.

Researchers analysing health records from Finland found that older adults who had serious infections such as urinary tract infections or other bacterial illnesses were more likely to develop dementia years later. The study reviewed data from more than 62,000 people with dementia and compared them with over 300,000 without the condition.

Notably, the increased risk remained even after accounting for other health problems, suggesting infections themselves may play a role. In many cases, these infections occurred five to six years before dementia was diagnosed.

Experts believe such illnesses might speed up underlying damage in the brain, though they stress the findings do not prove direct cause and effect.

The authors say better prevention and timely treatment of infections could potentially delay or reduce dementia risk, but further studies are needed to confirm this possibility.

Advances in surgical oncology bringing new hope to Bangladesh

DR TAREQ SALAHUDDIN

As cancer continues to rise across South Asia, global collaboration and advances in surgical oncology are offering new hope for patients. The 3rd SingHealth Peritoneal Surface Oncology Conference, organised by the Department of Sarcoma, Peritoneal and Rare Tumours (SPRinT) at the National Cancer Centre Singapore, brought together leading experts to share innovations in treating complex cancers, particularly those affecting the peritoneal surface. Among the contributors was Bangladeshi surgical oncologist Dr Hasan Shahriar Md Nuruzzaman (Kallol), who presented his team's early experience in managing advanced peritoneal malignancies—an area where treatment options have traditionally been limited.

Dr Kallol, an Associate Professor of Surgical Oncology at the National Institute of Cancer Research & Hospital (NICRH) in Dhaka, represents a growing cohort of Bangladeshi specialists striving to bridge the gap between global advances and local practice. With training in international centres, including the National Cancer Centre Singapore, his work focuses on improving outcomes for patients with complex cancers such as breast, gastrointestinal, and peritoneal malignancies.

In Bangladesh, cancer patterns reflect both global trends and local challenges. According to Dr Kallol, breast cancer remains the most common among women, followed by cancers of the cervix and uterus, while men frequently present with cancers of the lung, oesophagus, and stomach. However, a major limitation remains the absence of a comprehensive national cancer



Dr Hasan Shahriar Md Nuruzzaman (Kallol), along with the participants of the 3rd SingHealth Peritoneal Surface Oncology Conference at the National Cancer Centre Singapore.

registry, making it difficult to fully understand the burden of disease. While some institutional data exist, a coordinated, nationwide effort is still lacking—something he believes is both feasible and urgently needed.

One of the most pressing challenges is late diagnosis. Many patients initially seek care from informal providers or delay medical consultation, often arriving at specialised centres only when the disease has advanced. This delay significantly reduces the chances of successful treatment. Dr Kallol emphasises that early detection remains the most effective way to improve survival, urging greater public awareness and timely medical evaluation.

At the same time, surgical oncology has evolved dramatically over the past two decades. Procedures that were once highly invasive are now safer and more precise, with reduced blood loss and improved recovery. In breast cancer, for instance, many patients can now undergo breast-conserving surgery instead of complete removal. Similarly, advanced techniques such as cytoreductive surgery (CRS) combined with intraperitoneal chemotherapy are offering new possibilities for patients with peritoneal cancers—conditions that

previously carried a poor prognosis.

Despite these advances, Bangladesh faces a critical shortage of specialised cancer surgeons. According to the GLOBOCAN 2022 (International Agency for Research on Cancer, WHO), Bangladesh records approximately about 167,000 new cancer cases per year. Dr Nuruzzaman highlights the need for long-term investment in training while also equipping general surgeons with basic oncological principles to bridge the gap in the interim.

Beyond technical expertise, he underscores the importance of communication and trust. Many patients remain skeptical about local treatment and seek care abroad, often unnecessarily. Clear communication, patient education, and a more compassionate approach, he argues, are essential to rebuilding confidence in the country's healthcare system.

Ultimately, the future of cancer care in Bangladesh depends not only on technology, but also on teamwork. Effective treatment requires close collaboration between surgeons, oncologists, radiologists, pathologists, and nurses. As global knowledge continues to expand, integrating these multidisciplinary approaches locally may be the key to transforming cancer outcomes in the country.

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BUSY BEE SYNDROME When busyness becomes a burden

PROF DR RUBAUL MURSHED

In a world where packed calendars signal success, a growing concern is emerging: "Busy Bee Syndrome," a pattern where constant activity masks deeper strain.

Many people today equate busyness with worth, wearing exhaustion as a badge of honour while treating rest as indulgence. Yet beneath this culture of endless motion lies a quieter cost. Remaining perpetually occupied keeps the body in a prolonged stress response, gradually draining energy, weakening immunity, and dulling mental clarity.

What appears as productivity can slowly spiral into burnout, anxiety, or even depression. Experts note that relentless scheduling often provides a sense of importance, reinforcing the idea that being needed equals being valuable. However, this constant engagement may also serve as an emotional shield.

By filling every moment with tasks, individuals avoid confronting loneliness, grief, or uncertainty. These unaddressed feelings do not vanish; they resurface as irritability, fatigue, and emotional distress over time.

The solution, researchers suggest, lies not in doing more, but in restoring balance. Human well-being depends on rhythm periods of effort followed by rest. As the pace of modern life accelerates, the quiet act of pausing may be the most essential habit of all for healthier minds and more meaningful lives today.

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ANTIBIOTICS LOSING POWER: A growing global health crisis

DR LOKIAT ULLAH

Antibiotics, once hailed as miracle drugs, are now facing a silent yet escalating threat called antibiotic resistance. This growing crisis, driven by misuse and overuse, is steadily weakening one of medicine's most powerful tools.

Used to treat infections caused by microorganisms, antibiotics are essential for recovery. Yet, physicians today are increasingly confronted with a troubling reality: many of these drugs are no longer effective. The World Health Organisation warns that by 2050, antibiotic resistance could claim over 10 million lives annually worldwide. What once cured infections with ease is now struggling to keep pace with evolving microbes.

The problem is particularly pressing in countries like Bangladesh, where regulations around antibiotic use are poorly enforced. Although antibiotics are meant to be dispensed only with a valid prescription, they are often sold freely. Drug shops frequently provide these medicines on request, with little regard for proper dosage or duration. This unregulated access fuels a dangerous cycle of misuse.

A major contributor to resistance is incomplete or inappropriate use. Patients often stop taking antibiotics once they feel better, unaware that this allows surviving microorganisms to adapt and become resistant. Over time, these resistant strains spread, making future infections harder and sometimes impossible to treat.

This growing resistance is already taking a toll. Patients suffer longer illnesses, healthcare costs rise, and physicians face mounting challenges in finding effective treatments. What appears to be a simple infection can turn into a prolonged, life-threatening condition.

Addressing this crisis requires collective responsibility. Awareness among the public is crucial. Antibiotics should never be taken without proper medical advice, and prescriptions must be strictly followed. Pharmacy owners, healthcare providers, and regulatory bodies must also play their part by ensuring responsible dispensing practices.

Antibiotics are not just medicines; they are vital weapons against disease. If misused, they risk becoming blunt tools, unable to protect those who need them most. The message is clear and urgent: safeguarding antibiotics today is essential for saving lives tomorrow.

The future of healthcare depends on it.

The write is a physician, medical researcher, and entrepreneur.

When stress shows on your teeth

DR ADILY ADIB KHAN

Mental health may not be the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about oral hygiene, yet growing evidence shows a clear and often overlooked connection between the two.

Stress and anxiety can quietly disrupt daily routines, making even simple habits like brushing and flossing feel overwhelming. As these routines slip, plaque and bacteria begin to build, leading to enamel damage, gum irritation, and persistent bad breath. What starts as emotional strain can quickly translate into visible dental problems.

One of the most striking links is "Bruxism"—the unconscious grinding or clenching of teeth,



often triggered by stress. This condition can occur during the day or while asleep, and over time it may lead to jaw pain, headaches, tooth damage, and even disturbed sleep. In some

cases, it becomes severe enough to affect daily functioning.

Stress also weakens the immune system, leaving gums more vulnerable to infection and increasing the risk of periodontal disease. Signs of bruxism may include chipped or flattened teeth, enamel erosion, jaw tightness, facial pain, and headaches around the temples. Many people may not realise they have the condition until noticeable damage occurs.

Management often requires both dental and psychological care. Dentists may recommend mouth guards to protect teeth, while lifestyle changes such as reducing caffeine, limiting alcohol, and quitting smoking can ease symptoms. Stress management techniques, including exercise, meditation, and therapy, are equally vital.

Maintaining social connections, spending time with loved ones, and engaging in meaningful activities can also support mental wellbeing. Interestingly, dentists are sometimes among the first to detect early signs of emotional distress through oral symptoms.

The message is simple yet powerful: caring for mental health is not separate from caring for physical health. A healthy mind supports a healthy smile, and together, they form the foundation of overall wellbeing.

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HEIGHT AND HEALTH: When being tall comes with hidden risks

Being tall may come with hidden health risks, according to new genetic research linking height to serious cardiovascular and reproductive conditions.

A large-scale analysis involving more than 120,000 East Asian individuals has found that greater height is associated with a higher risk of "atrial fibrillation"—an irregular and often rapid heart rhythm and "Endometriosis", a condition where tissue similar to the uterine lining grows outside the uterus. The findings, published in PLOS Genetics, highlight how the biology of height extends far beyond appearance.

Researchers identified nearly 300 genetic

variants linked to height and explored how these influence overall health. The study also found connections between height and traits such as lung function, body size, and reproductive patterns, including the age of menstruation onset.

While shorter individuals appeared less likely to develop endometriosis, experts stress that height itself is not a cause, but a marker shaped by complex genetic factors.

The findings may aid early risk prediction in future healthcare. However, researchers caution that further studies are needed before these insights can guide routine clinical decisions.



Too hot to move: Climate change driving global inactivity



Rising global temperatures may be quietly reshaping human behaviour and health by pushing millions towards physical inactivity, according to a new modelling study published in The Lancet Global Health.

As climate change intensifies heat exposure worldwide, researchers warn that even small increases in temperature could significantly reduce people's ability to stay active. Analysing data from 156 countries between 2000 and 2022, the study projects that by 2050, each additional month with average temperatures above 27.8°C could raise global physical inactivity by 1.5 percentage points.

The impact is expected to be more pronounced in low- and middle-income countries, where inactivity could rise even further. Regions such as Central America, the Caribbean, Eastern Sub-Saharan Africa, and Equatorial Southeast Asia may face the steepest increases, driven by prolonged exposure to extreme heat.

The consequences extend beyond lifestyle changes. Researchers estimate that rising inactivity linked to climate change could contribute to between 470,000 and 700,000 premature deaths annually, alongside billions of dollars in lost productivity. While these findings are based on projections, experts stress the urgency of action.

Measures such as designing cooler cities, expanding access to safe indoor exercise spaces, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions may help mitigate the growing health risks of a warming world.