



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

News Release

Issued: Tuesday 19 May 2015

Stress levels linked to risk of liver disease death, study shows

Suffering from anxiety or depression could carry an increased risk of death from liver disease, a study suggests.

The study is the first to identify a possible link between high levels of psychological distress and deaths resulting from a variety of liver diseases.

Reasons for this are unclear as the biological links between psychological distress and liver disease are not well understood, researchers say.

Previous research suggests mental distress can put people at increased risk of cardiovascular disease. At the same time, risk factors for cardiovascular disease – such as obesity and raised blood pressure – have been linked to a common form of liver disease, known as non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

In a similar way, suffering from anxiety and depression may be indirectly linked to an increased risk of death from liver disease, the team says.

Researchers at the University of Edinburgh investigated responses to a questionnaire capturing psychological distress in more than 165,000 people. They then tracked participants' progress over a ten-year period, examining who died and the causes of death.

Individuals who scored highly for symptoms of psychological distress were more likely to later die from liver disease than those with lower scores, the team says. The study took into account factors such as alcohol consumption, obesity, diabetes, and socioeconomic status.

The study is published in the journal *Gastroenterology*.

Dr Tom Russ, of the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences, who led the research, said: "This study provides further evidence for the important links between mind and body, and of the damaging effects psychological distress can have on physical wellbeing. While we are not able to confirm direct cause and effect, this study does provide evidence that requires further consideration in future studies."

For further information, please contact:

Corin Campbell, Press & PR Office, tel 0131 650 6382, email Corin.Campbell@ed.ac.uk

Ranked among the top universities in the world