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Loneliness is Closely Associated with Depression Outcomes and Suicidal Ideation Among Military Veterans in Primary Care

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Abstract

Background

Although the substantial influence of social relationships on health is well-known, studies that concurrently examine the influence of varying dimensions of social connectedness on major depression are more limited. This study's aim was to determine to what degree several facets of social connectedness (number of confidants, social support, interpersonal conflict, social norms, and loneliness) are correlated with depression-related outcomes.

Methods

Participants were primary care patients (n=301) with probable major depression at a Veterans Health Administration hospital and its satellite clinics. Social connectedness was primarily measured using multi-item instruments from the NIH Toolbox of Adult Social Relationship Scales. Primary outcomes were clinical symptoms (depression and suicidal ideation) and secondary outcomes were self-reported health-related behaviors (medication adherence, patient activation, and help-seeking intentions).

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