

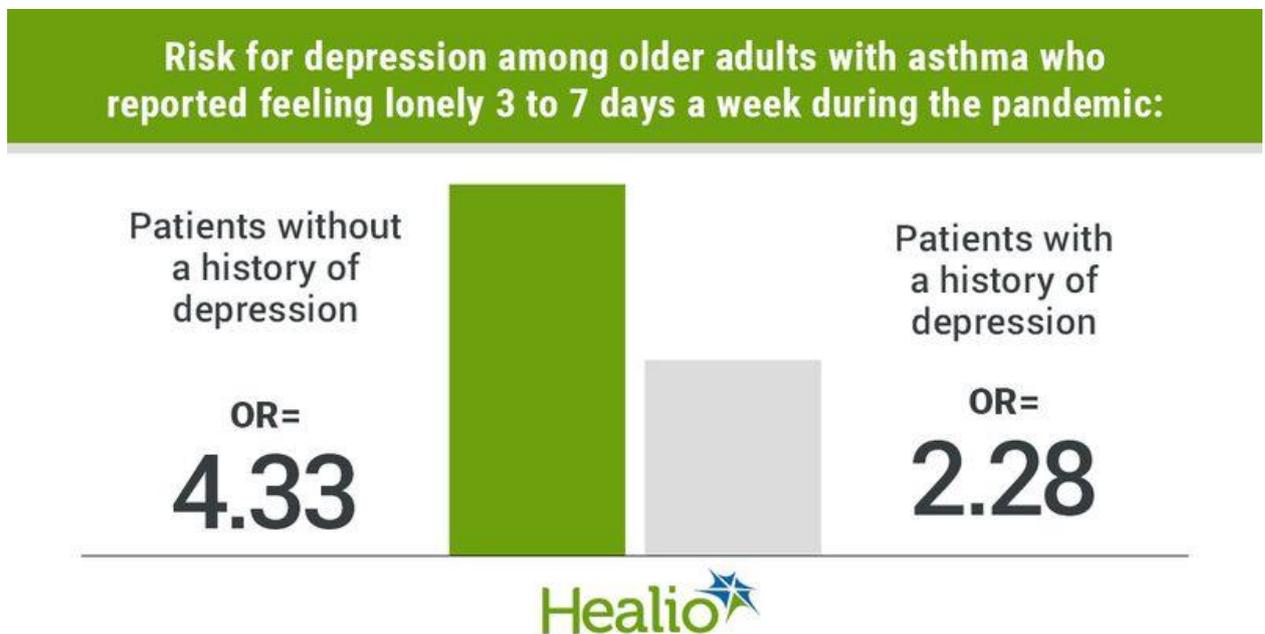
COVID-19 pandemic linked to depression among older adults with asthma

Isabella Hornick

Healio (06.02.2023)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, loneliness, family conflict and difficulty accessing health care raised the risk for first-time and recurrent depression among older adults with asthma, according to a study published in *Respiratory Medicine*.

“Our findings underline the importance of clinicians [screening for depression](#) among their older patients with asthma, whether or not their patients had experienced depression at any point of their pre-pandemic life,” **Esme Fuller-Thomson, PhD**, director of the Institute for Life Course and Aging at the University of Toronto and professor in the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, told Healio.



Data were derived from MacNeil A, et al. Respir Med. 2022;doi:10.1016/j.rmed.2022.107003.

Fuller-Thomson and colleagues analyzed data of 2,017 older adults (mean age, 61.1 years; 59.8% women) with asthma from the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging to identify factors linked to depression risk during COVID-19 in this patient population using bivariate and multivariate logistic regression analyses.

The population included patients without a history of depression (n = 1,247) and those with a history of depression (n = 770), with depression assessed using the

short form of the Centre for Epidemiologic Studies – Depression (CES-D-10) scale. Researchers used baseline data taken between 2011 and 2015, as well as follow-up data taken between 2015 to 2018, spring 2020 and autumn 2020.

Researchers found that 13.5% of patients who did not have prior depression developed it during the pandemic, whereas depression recurred among 48.6% patients with a history of depression in autumn 2020.

“We were dismayed to discover one in seven older adults with asthma who had no pre-pandemic history of depression were depressed during the autumn of 2020,” Fuller-Thomson told Healio. “Usually those who have managed to be free of depression throughout the first 5, 6 or more decades of their life can ride through most of life’s challenges without developing depression for the first time. It appears that the demands of the pandemic took a huge toll on many formerly [mentally healthy older adults with asthma](#).”

For both those with and without a history of depression, researchers found an increased risk for depression among patients who reported feeling lonely 3 to 7 days a week (no history, OR = 4.33; 95% CI, 2.72-6.91; history of depression, OR = 2.28; 95% CI, 1.54-3.37), experienced verbal or physical conflict related to their family (no history, OR = 4.18; 95% CI, 2.47-7.07; history of depression, OR = 3.82; 95% CI, 2.36-6.18), and struggled to access health care during the pandemic (no history, OR = 1.55; 95% CI, 1.03-2.3; history of depression, OR = 1.71; 95% CI, 1.19-2.45).

Additionally, researchers found an increased risk for first-time depression among patients who struggled to access resources and/or experienced a loss of income (OR = 1.6; 95% CI, 1.03-2.5).

On the other hand, a greater risk for recurrent depression was observed among patients with functional limitations (OR = 2.58; 95% CI, 1.76-3.79) and those who reported participating in few or no religious activities (OR = 1.49; 95% CI, 1.02-2.19).

“In terms of future studies, we are exploring depression during the pandemic in other vulnerable health groups, including older adults with cancer, stroke and COPD,” Fuller-Thomson told Healio.

Reference:

- Older adults with asthma at high risk for depression during the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/976963>. Published Jan. 19, 2023. Accessed Jan. 19, 2023.