

ANXIETY AND DEMENTIA IN OLDER SWEDISH TWINS

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Anxiety is the most common mental health problem in later life. Higher anxiety has been associated with worse cognitive functioning. Furthermore, research suggests some anxiety disorders may be risk factors for developing mild cognitive impairment and/or dementia. No research has examined symptoms of anxiety and risk of dementia longitudinally over a span of many years. The purpose of this study was to examine the association between anxiety and subsequent risk of developing dementia over a span of 23 years. In 1984, 767 Swedish Twins completed an assessment of state anxiety (State Anxiety subscale from the State-Trait Personality Inventory; STPI). From 1986-2007, participants completed as many as six cognitive assessments approximately every three years. Proportional hazard regression analysis, adjusted for sex, education, and baseline age were used to examine if participants who scored above the mean on the STPI in 1984 were at greater risk of subsequently developing dementia. A random effect of twin pair was included in the model to account for the non-independence of the data. Over the period of this study, 124 participants developed dementia. Those participants who developed dementia were significantly more anxious at baseline ($M = 20.1$; $SD = 8.5$) than participants who did not develop dementia ($M = 18.5$; $SD = 7.6$; $p = 0.04$). Elevated anxiety was associated with greater risk of developing dementia over age (hazard ratio = 1.59; $p = 0.013$). Results indicate that anxiety may be an important overlooked risk factor for dementia in older adulthood.