

Suicide risk almost seven times higher after diagnosis of young onset dementia

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A study of nearly 600,000 people in England shows that suicide risk in the first three months following a dementia diagnosis for patients aged under 65 is nearly 7 times higher than in patients without dementia.

In the UK, around 850,000 people are currently living with [dementia](#) and it's the leading cause of death. Around 42,000 of these have young onset dementia. Only around two-thirds of those living with dementia have received a diagnosis, and improving access to a timely and accurate [dementia diagnosis](#) is a major NHS priority. However, the expansion of memory clinics for diagnosing dementia has not always been accompanied by additional resources for supporting patients in the difficult period after they are given a diagnosis.

Researchers from Queen Mary University of London and University of Nottingham undertook a population-based case-control study of medical records from 2001–2019 to determine if there was a link between dementia diagnosis and suicide risk. The researchers found that nearly 2% of patients with a dementia diagnosis died from

suicide. The results showed that patients were at a high risk of suicide after a dementia diagnosis if aged under 65, during the first three months after a diagnosis, or if they had known psychiatric illness.

Early recognition and a timely accurate diagnosis of dementia, combined with specialist support, are hugely [important factors](#) in reducing the distress caused by a young onset diagnosis.

Dr. Charles Marshall, senior author and Clinical Senior Lecturer and Honorary Consultant Neurologist at the Wolfson Institute of Population Health at Queen Mary, said:

"Improving access to a dementia diagnosis is an important healthcare priority. However, a dementia diagnosis can be devastating, and our work shows that we also need to ensure that services have the resources to provide appropriate support after a diagnosis is given."

Dr. Danah Alothman, lead author and Researcher at the University of Nottingham, said:

"These findings suggest that memory clinics should particularly target [suicide risk](#) assessment to patients with young-onset dementia, patients in the first few months after dementia [diagnosis](#) and [patients](#) already known to have psychiatric problems."

More information: Risk of suicide after dementia diagnosis: a longitudinal population-based study, *JAMA Neurology* (2022). DOI: [10.1001/jamaneurol.2022.3094](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamaneurol.2022.3094)

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