Can Common Allergies Lead to Psychiatric Disorders?

Asthma and hay fever are associated with an increased risk of mental illness.

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Annually, more than 50 million Americans are affected by allergies. Now, recent findings published in the journal Frontiers in Psychiatry suggest that people with common asthma and hay fever, for example, face a greater risk of developing a psychiatric disorder, reports ScienceDaily.

For the assessment, researchers used an extensive database of health insurance claims in Taiwan that spanned a 15-year period. Scientists identified 46,647 people of all ages with allergic diseases and 139,941 without.

Results showed that almost 11 percent of citizens with an allergic condition were more likely to develop a psychiatric disorder compared with 6.7 percent of those with no allergic disease. The risk of experiencing a mental disorder was highest for those with asthma and hay fever while people with eczema had a lower risk. What's more, scientists also learned that certain asthma medications were linked to a lower risk of psychiatric problems in asthma patients.

Researchers believe that the inflammation associated with certain allergic diseases may increase the probability of mental disorders, which also involve inflammation.

"We would like to let clinicians who care for patients with allergic diseases know that their risk for psychiatric diseases may be higher," said Nian-Sheng Tzeng, MD, of the Tri-Service General Hospital in Taiwan and the study's lead author. "Assessing their emotional condition and monitoring their mental health could help to avoid later psychiatric problems."

Click here to learn how childhood allergies might raise the risk of heart disease for individuals later in life.

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