



Effective Health Care

Social Isolation in Older Adults

Next Steps

The nominator is interested in a new report that synthesizes recent evidence on interventions to address social isolation to improve health and reduce health care utilization in older adults.

After discussing the needs of the nominator, including the need for a rapid summary of evidence to inform discussions on what interventions are most promising to implement, this topic will go forward for development as a rapid review. The scope of this topic, including populations, interventions, comparators, and outcomes, will be further developed in consultation with the nominator. To sign up for notification when this and other Effective Health Care (EHC) Program evidence reviews are available please go to <https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/email-updates>.

Summary

Topic Name and Number: #0779 Social Isolation in Older Adults

Date: 8/16/18

Key question(s) from the nomination:

1. Among older adults, what is the effectiveness of interventions (e.g., volunteerism, peer support, transportation programs, etc.) that target social isolation and loneliness to improve health?
 2. Among older adults, what are the harms associated with interventions (e.g., volunteerism, peer support, transportation programs, etc.) that target social isolation and loneliness to improve health?
- Older adults are at high risk of social isolation and loneliness due to age-related changes in health, social networks, and mobility. Social isolation and loneliness have been linked to worse health outcomes, including poor physical health, dementia, and mortality.¹⁻⁴
 - The nominator is interested in an evidence report describing which social isolation interventions improve health and reduce unnecessary health care utilization among older adults. The nominator is planning a Healthy Aging Summit in September 2018 that will bring together health systems, community groups, and advocacy groups to develop and implement interventions, guidance and a research agenda around this goal.
 - The nominator needs evidence rapidly, is looking for guidance on which interventions to implement, and does not need a high degree of confidence (e.g., does not need all existing evidence, only the most recent) in order to move forward. Therefore, a rapid review was determined to be an appropriate product to meet their needs.

References

1. Cornwell EY, Waite LJ. Social disconnectedness, perceived isolation, and health among older adults. *Journal of health and social behavior*. 2009;50(1):31-48.
2. Fratiglioni L, Wang HX, Ericsson K, Maytan M, Winblad B. Influence of social network on occurrence of dementia: a community-based longitudinal study. *Lancet (London, England)*. 2000;355(9212):1315-1319.

3. Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Baker M, Harris T, Stephenson D. Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mortality: a meta-analytic review. *Perspectives on psychological science : a journal of the Association for Psychological Science*. 2015;10(2):227-237.
4. Perissinotto CM, Stijacic Cenzer I, Covinsky KE. Loneliness in older persons: A predictor of functional decline and death. *Archives of Internal Medicine*. 2012;172(14):1078-1084.