

Social Support for Elders May Help Prevent Cardiovascular Disease and Death

Category: Research

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Researchers from the [University of Washington Seattle](#) released a report on Valentine's day that shows that increasing social support could not only improve depressive symptoms, but also prevents cardiovascular disease and even pre-mature death in older American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) people.

Researchers studied AI/AN adults who participated in the [Strong Heart Family Study](#) from 12 communities in over 3 regions between 2000-2003 and, "...". There was a correlation between those who had reported depressive symptoms, lower quality of life, isolation, heart disease, and death.

Participants in the study were middle-aged adults. The depressive symptoms cited were emotions such as anger self-criticism, and cynicism, and were matched with poor quality of life and isolation. However, better social support saw lower cynicism levels, anger, and trauma. Researchers found that depression and a poorer quality of life, along with social isolation created a higher risk for mortality and cardiovascular events. However, social support lowered that risk. Overall, the study suggests that social support leads to better mood and quality of life in AI/AN elders, and may even lower cynicism, stress, and overall disease risk.

Urban Indian Organizations already provide so much programming and support for their elders, not only in the form of social connections, but also health services. It is a priority to connect elders to one another and other resources to help address social determinants of health and close the health inequalities that urban Indian communities face in the United States.