Can Loneliness Shorten Life Expectancy?

Though loneliness has long been associated with poor mental health (including issues like depression), a new study suggests social isolation may be detrimental to physical health as well and could even hasten death. Researchers looked at the data of dozens of studies, which included more than 3 million people, before coming to this conclusion. The research focused on how loneliness, social isolation and/or living alone affects longevity. Participants averaged 66 years old and some struggled from some sort of chronic illness. They recently published their findings in *Perspectives on Psychological Science*.

"Loneliness is about the perception of being lonely, not the act of being alone," said Lisa Jaremka, assistant professor of psychological and brain sciences at the University of Delaware in Newark. "So, all of the research in this area is about people who feel lonely, regardless of their actual social network."

Though we don't commonly think of social factors when it comes to physical health, this research shows that social isolation is actually more predictive of death than health issues like exercise, blood pressure and cholesterol medications. The research team found that having few or no social contacts or activities upped the risk for dying sooner by nearly 30 percent. The feeling of being lonely, whether or not a person had social interactions, was also linked to a 26 percent higher risk for an earlier death.

There is quite a bit more research needed to figure out why being lonely can shorten a life, and it is important to remember that being lonely and living alone are not mutually exclusive. People can feel lonely even if they are surrounded by people every day. However, the connection between experiencing loneliness and living a shorter life is clear.

"Because it turns out that we are literally wired to be social beings, and our immune system and our stress response just function better when we are in a collective. It turns out that we are basically healthier when we are social," said study co-author Timothy B. Smith, a professor in the department of psychology at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.

"People have a very basic and fundamental need to feel connected to and cared for by other people," added Jaremka. "Lonely people are lacking in this area. They aren't fulfilling this basic need, and thus, negative things happen as a result."

iPad Therapy May Help Mend Speech Issue for Stroke Patients

Recent research suggests that personalized therapy using an iPad can benefit individuals who are suffering from aphasia brain disorder, which is generally the result of a stroke. Each year, according to the article on Futurity.org, an estimated 200,000 people acquire aphasia.
For the study, researchers gave 51 aphasia patients an iPad to see how effective they could be in delivering personalized therapy and whether a structured iPad-based software program including homework could lead to significant gains in communication ability. Participants were split into two groups—one group had only a weekly one-hour session with a clinician using iPad therapy and the other group had the weekly sessions as well a set of personalized tasks to practice at home with the iPad.

Though the group who continued their personal therapy at home did see more improvements, even those who only had the once weekly sessions with their clinician did see some improvement. Aphasia sufferers need long term care to recover, which can be a problem depending on insurance and a patient’s ability to pay for therapy.

“In the context of what we know about neuroplasticity, the main thing is you have to have repeated practice, repeated exposure, and you need to do it in a very structured way,” said Swathi Kiran, director of the university's Aphasia Research Laboratory and coauthor of the study.

Mobile devices loaded with specialized software, like those used in the study, could make a major difference in this regard. They will enable aphasia sufferers to put in the work at home when they have time, rather than relying solely on therapy sessions and what their insurance will cover.

Few Seniors Take Advantage of Medicare Obesity Counseling

Obesity is especially hazardous for an aging body—it increases inflammation, exacerbates bone and muscle loss and significantly raises the risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. In order to help the nearly 13 million obese seniors in the U.S., the Affordable Care Act (ACA) included a new Medicare benefit that offers face-to-face weight-loss counseling in primary care physician’s offices. This service comes completely free to obese patients but has seen very little participation. According to a recent article from Kaiser Health News, only 50,000 seniors took advantage of the weight-loss counseling program in 2013.

Experts believe that obese patients and many doctors aren’t aware of the benefit and that doctors may also feel reluctant to intervene in their patients’ lives. Weight problems can still be a touchy subject, particularly with the elderly. Weight loss specialists place blame for poor awareness of the benefit on the federal government’s decision to only offer the counseling through primary care offices.

“The problem with using only primary care providers,” says Bonnie Modugno, a registered dietician in Santa Monica, California, “is that they completely ruled out direct reimbursement for the population of providers who are uniquely qualified and experienced working with weight management.” Specialists, like registered dieticians and endocrinologists, who might be managing a person’s diabetes, and cardiologists, who monitor patients with heart disease have a unique perspective on their patients and could help deal with weight loss issues.

“If we change the nature of how…the counseling occurs, I don’t see it being available to people in a meaningful way,” said Modugno.

April 2015 Observances

Next Week (April 6-12) is National Public Health Week: For the past 20 years the first week of April has been declared National Public Health Week (NPHW). This week is seen as a time to recognize the contributions of public health and focus on issues that are important to improving health care. Check out www.apha.org for more information.

April 12 – 18, 2015 is National Volunteer Week: Volunteers help make our long term care centers better each and every day. Take time during National Volunteer Week to thank your volunteers! This is also a great time to focus on seeking out new volunteers from your local community. Visit www.handsonnetwork.org for more.

This Month is National Parkinson's Awareness Month: This national observation was instated to bring awareness to Parkinson’s disease, its symptoms and treatments. Take time this month to learn about this disease and to help spread
this knowledge within your community. Find more information on the Parkinson’s Disease Foundation’s website: www.pdf.org.

AHCA/NCAL Information

AHCA Taking Nominations for the AHCA Board of Governors
The 2015-2016 election cycle will officially open on April 4, 2015 for their Board of Governors. These elections are for three officer positions (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary/Treasurer), one Independent Owner Representative, one Regional Multi-facility Representative and two At-large Representatives. AHCA members in good standing are eligible to run for the AHCA Board of Governors. Interested individuals may obtain the necessary candidacy materials online here. Applicants must complete and electronically submit the AHCA candidacy materials via email to Christy Sharp at csharp@ahca.org by close of business on June 4, 2015. For more information, click here.

AHCA Offering New Two New Clinical Resource Guides
The Rehospitalization Subcommittee of AHCA’s Clinical Practice Committee developed an Elements for Effective Care Transitions, Ideas and Resources for Post-Acute Care Providers Guide. This guide identifies four categories of multiple elements that assist in effective care transitions, including how to assess and develop clinical capabilities, identify key community providers, develop and grow provider relationships and collect and report data. In addition, the guide provides an introduction to ten free AHCA/NCAL webinars that elaborate further on each of these element categories. Links to the webinars are included within the guide document.

The End of Life Care Subcommittee of AHCA’s Clinical Practice Committee designed a Considerations for End of Life Care Competency Guide. This guide is built around the Holistic Approach to Transformational Change (HATCh) domains and includes an array of strategies to enhance care at the end of a person’s life. The guide can be used to discover strengths or gaps in knowledge, skill or attitude and to help develop strategies to enhance end of life care. As organizations move toward QAPI, this guide could be used by quality and performance improvement committees to consider areas for performance improvement projects. In addition, one of the webinars in the Clinical Practice Series last year is focused on end-of-life care and is a valuable supplement to this guide.

Stay Informed about the ongoing AHCA Payment Reform Initiative!
Last June the Chair of the AHCA Board of Governors appointed a Payment Reform Task Force, whose goal was to develop a viable, proactive and comprehensive vision for payment reform. This vision needed to be suitable for advocacy with Congress, CMS and the Congressional Medicare and Medicaid advisory commissions. Since then the task force has been hard at work on this issue, and has presented a number of reform concept papers.

AHCA members can now access up-to-date information regarding the Payment Reform Initiative (PRI) on the new PRI web pages on www.ahcancal.org, which contain an overview of the initiative, details on the payment concepts and more. You must be logged in as an AHCA member to view the pages.

Just Two Weeks Left to Submit Nominations for Provider Magazine’s 20 To Watch!
Provider is now accepting nominations for its third annual 20 To Watch list. AHCA/NCAL is looking for rising stars from member facilities—from housekeeping staff to CEO—who exemplify the dedication, hard work and compassionate care required for a commitment to improving the quality of life for all residents. Finalists will be featured in a summer issue of Provider and commemorated on our special “20 To Watch” website. Nominations are due April 17. For more information on how to submit nominations, click here.

National Nursing Home Week 2015
National Nursing Home Week (NNHW) — May 10-16, 2015, will be here before we know it! Has your facility already started planning? Your facility staff and residents are sure to have a good time focusing on “Familia, Vida and Amor” (family, life, love) with this year’s theme—Bring on the Fiesta! Visit the NNHW webpage for planning ideas and much more!

Also, check out the AHCA/NCAL online store for themed products, like buttons, banners, t-shirts and more that could help make your NNHW special!
NCAL Has Announced the Theme for This Year's National Assisted Living Week®
Let the planning begin! NCAL is proud to announce the 2015 National Assisted Living Week® (NALW) theme – suggested by you – “Nourishing Life: Mind, Body, Spirit.”

NCAL received many wonderful theme and activity suggestions and “Nourishing Life: Mind, Body, Spirit” stood out as a theme that truly embodies all that assisted living represents. This theme celebrates the countless ways assisted living caregivers nurture the whole resident. Communities across the country work each and every day to ensure that the lives of their residents are fully nourished in each and every way.

Check out the NCAL website or the NALW Facebook Page for more information as it becomes available!

April Webinars
AHCA/NCAL offers webinars each month on a variety of important topics. April webinars include:

- Achieve Quality Improvement By Using the Rehospitalization Measure in LTC Trend Tracker™ and PointRight® Pro 30™ - April 7, 2015

IHCA PAC Information
Don't Miss Out on Our Southern Illinois Golf Outing!!!
The outing is sooner than you think, sign up today! Friday, June 5, you can enjoy a round of golf on Stonewolf's Jack Nicklaus signature course. That means the man, the legend himself; Jack Nicklaus took an active hand in the total design and construction of this magnificent golf course. Cost is $100 per golfer, which includes lunch, 18 holes of golf, awards and prizes, on course beverages and as always a great opportunity to network with your fellow IHCA members. Reserve your spot today by filling out the registration form and return to Ashley Snavely.

A big thanks to ONR for their generous support of the event. For additional sponsorship opportunities, please contact Ashley Snavely or Matt Hartman.

IHCA PAC Associate & Individual Member Monthly Giveaway Promotion
The IHCA PAC has made a conscious effort to expand the role of the associate and vendor community in PAC activities in 2015 and beyond. We understand that not everyone is able to participate as a sponsor at the large event level, but now we are offering an alternative opportunity to get your name out in front of our facility members and help the IHCA PAC at the same time.

Say hello to our monthly giveaway concept! New for 2015! At the beginning of the year we introduced our new raffle program. Each month an IHCA Associate or Individual Member donates a prize to the IHCA PAC, be it a pair of baseball tickets, a spa day certificate, a 30 day all inclusive trip to Europe (okay, that one may be a little excessive), a trial week of the service you offer as an associate member, etc. The IHCA PAC Newsletter for that month will do a feature on the donating member, and offer members the opportunity to purchase chances to win the prize, usually in the $25 - 50 range. As the monthly giveaway sponsor, you would be the featured Associate or Individual Member in the PAC Newsletter for that month, as well as receiving mention in the weekly IHCA News Brief. The giveaway culminates with a grand prize drawing at the 65th Annual Convention and Expo in September in Peoria, with the grand prize still TBD. All past prize donors will be honored in materials promoting that event as well. Additionally, all sponsors and donors will receive mention in the IHCA Annual Report--PAC section, as well as ongoing mention on the IHCA PAC website.

If you have an item or service that you would like to donate to this fun cause, and raise a little awareness for your company at the same time, get in touch with Matt Hartman or Ashley Snavely right away!
March Giveaway - $250 Spa Certificate!
And the winner is... Lola White from Evergreen Nursing and Rehabilitation Center!!! Lola won the $200 spa gift certificate to a local spa of her choice! She was also the one who purchased the most tickets to be entered into the drawing. The odds were ever in her favor!

Thank you to all who participated this month in the drawing and for supporting our PAC and to Mobilex for your generous sponsorship for the March raffle.

April Giveaway - Shoppers Paradise on the Prairie!
The April IHCA PAC raffle prize will be a $200 valued gift certificate package, donated by Petersen Health Care (thank you Petersen)! The package includes choice of room type at County Inn & Suites, Hampton Inn & Suites or Wingate by Wyndam in Peoria, a $50 Shoppes at Grand Prairie gift card, hot expanded breakfast buffet, complimentary shuttle service and a special shopping tote bag with coupons and bottled water. The Raffle opened April 1. This would be a great package to use during convention!

Here’s how it works: You pay $25 per chance to win! Enter as many times as you want for a better chance. Keep in mind that each monthly drawing you participate in will also place your name in the Grand Prize Drawing at the 65th Annual Convention and Expo in September. Print off this flyer to advertise it to your staff! Click here to fill out the entry form and return it with your entry fee ($25/chance to win!). All proceeds will go to the IHCA PAC.

Please make checks out to IHCA PAC and send your payment along with your entry form to:
IHCA PAC -- Monthly Giveaway
Illinois Health Care Association
1029 South Fourth Street
Springfield IL 62703-2224

Summer Baseball Game
This summer, IHCA will again be hosting a Cardinals vs. Cubs baseball fundraising event. After the very cold but successful event last year, IHCA PAC is offering another opportunity to take in a game featuring baseball’s best rivalry, do some networking with other long term care professionals, and get out of the office! A day at the ballpark offers the chance to connect with other long term care professionals and conduct business in a relaxed atmosphere. The game will be held Wednesday, July 8 in Chicago, with a scheduled game time of 7:00pm (Doors open at 6:15). We will be utilizing a center field rooftop with great amenities and no blocked view!! Your purchase price of $200 guarantees you a seat and a variety of drink and meal options. We hope you’ll take advantage of the opportunity to support the association and enjoy a ballgame!

Tickets to the game are now available! Interested parties can contact Matt Hartman or via telephone at 217-528-6455.

IHCA Association Information
Have You Registered for the 18th Annual Resources for Success?!
Be sure to join us next week in Springfield, April 8 & 9, 2015 for IHCA/LTCNA’s 18th Annual Resources for Success! This year’s conference is “All About the Survey Process...Before, During and After.” Sessions include preparing for the survey; using QAPI, QMs and CASPER reports to assist in the survey; how to manage the survey once the surveyors enter the facility; how to manage the survey cycle; POCs and IDRs; and the importance of customer service before during and after the survey. Check out the Resources for Success page for more information or click here to view the brochure.

Applications for the 2015-2016 Maitland-Warner Scholarship are Now Being Accepted!
Each year, the John W. Maitland, Jr. – Joseph F. Warner Long Term Care Nurses Scholarship Fund awards scholarships to individuals seeking to pursue nursing degrees and employment in long term care in Illinois. The fund was created to honor
Senator John W. Maitland, Jr., and Joseph F. Warner, two champions of long term care in Illinois. Since its inception, the fund has awarded thousands of dollars in scholarships to nursing students all over the state (click here to view map of past winners).

The Maitland-Warner Long Term Care Nurses Scholarship fund will award scholarships of up to $1,000 for the 2015-2016 school year. To qualify, an applicant:

- Must have completed the prerequisites for and be accepted into an RN or LPN program on a full-time or part-time basis.
- Must be working in an assisted living or long term care facility (either full-time or part-time).
- Must provide proof of satisfactory completion of the semester for which the scholarship is awarded.
- Should be willing to work as an RN or LPN in an IHCA-member facility/program.

Click here for more information and to access the application forms (both online forms and printable). Applications must be submitted to IHCA by June 1, 2015!

**Interested in Exhibiting at IHCA’s 65th Annual Convention and Expo in September?**

The Changing Face of Long Term Care is a fantastic theme that is sure to bring a lot of good times along with it. The expo this year will be full of color and the fun that comes with a mardi gras theme—are you ready to be a part of it all? Exhibit at this year’s show! Booths are still available! Click here to view the Expo Prospectus prospectus.

**IHCA Member Spotlight**

**IHCA Associate Member – RehabCare**

*Nationally Known, Locally Focused*

RehabCare is the leading provider of rehabilitation services, including physical, occupational and speech-language therapies, to over 2,200 hospitals and long term care facilities in 47 states. They are the premier provider of rehab throughout the full continuum of care, including long term acute care hospitals, nursing and rehabilitation centers, inpatient acute rehab units, independent rehabilitation facilities and hospice and home care locations. As the nation’s preeminent rehab provider, RehabCare has the breadth and depth of resources to help organizations achieve clinical and business clinical success, but they also recognize that health care is local. While their vast expertise and strength enables them to take your program to the next level, they use a localized approach designed to meet the specific needs of each facility and community.

**Interested in Seeing Your Company or Facility Featured in Our IHCA Member Spotlight?**

IHCA is proud of our diverse membership and all of your successes and accomplishments. Has your company recently celebrated a milestone? Accomplished a goal? Undergone a major change? Do you have positive stories or news to share? Would you just like to get your name out there among your fellow IHCA members? If you would like to see your company or facility recognized in Members Only--Associate Members, Facilities, Corporations alike--contact acaldwell@ihca.com.

We look forward to hearing from you!