

Even mild cognitive dysfunction may disrupt health

By ACSH Staff — September 6, 2011

Dementia is among the leading causes of death among older adults, but researchers from the Division of General Internal Medicine and Geriatrics at Indiana University set out to [determine](#) ^[1] if milder forms of cognitive impairment are also associated with an increase in long-term mortality among patients aged 60 and older. For the study, published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, nearly 4,000 patients were recruited between 1991 and 1993 and screened for cognitive impairment. During the course of the study period, which lasted until 2006, patients suffering from mild cognitive impairment had a nearly 20 percent increased risk of death, while those with moderate to severe cognitive impairment were at a 50 percent increased risk of dying, compared to patients with no impairment.

What do the results of the study mean? Well, in a clinical setting, this means that if a doctor has a patient with mild cognitive impairment who also suffers from borderline hypertension, elevated cholesterol, or is a smoker, then the patient should be given more intense monitoring and counselling, says ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross. For instance, this would be a great opportunity for the doctor to convince the patient to quit smoking, or to err on the side of caution and put them on a statin if their cholesterol is elevated.

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