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Financial Stress Increases Suicide Risk For People With ADHD

October 13, 2020 08:00 by [Elizabeth Pratt](#) [About the Author]



Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is associated with higher financial distress and a higher risk of suicide for those in a lot of debt. Researchers from Ohio State University and Stockholm School of Economics examined mental health data from all adult residents of

Sweden and credit and default data from a random sample of Swedish adults to examine the financial outcomes of those with ADHD.

“The study was inspired by our previous [work](#). We realized the day-to-day life in modern societies require adequate executive skills, which people with ADHD grapple with. Once we learned that in Sweden, we can study these effects for the entire population, using objective measures of ADHD and financial performance, as opposed to survey-based reports, it was clear that this is the path forward,” Itzhak Ben-David, co-author of the study and a professor of finance at the Fisher College of Business at Ohio State University told Theravive.

The study authors collected data on suicide and ADHD between 2002 and 2015 for the 11.5 million adults in Sweden. The data was available through a Swedish government agency. In addition, they collected a random sample of credit and default data from 189, 267 Swedish residents during the same period.

Unlike other studies of ADHD that rely on self-reporting and small non-random samples, this study was a full population survey of every adult in Sweden and used real financial data that wasn't self-reported. The authors argue this strengthens the study.

The researchers found that those with ADHD show only a marginally higher need for credit compared with their peers before the age of 30. However, as they grow older and the rest of the population lowered its need for credit, those with ADHD saw an increase in demand.

Those with ADHD were four times more likely than their peers to have unpaid alimony, bank overdrafts, unpaid road taxes, impounded property and unpaid educational support. By 40 years of age, those with ADHD had six times the default risk than the general population.

“We document that people who were diagnosed with ADHD have trouble with managing their finances. They apply for credit (for example credit cards), but get rejected more often than the non-ADHD diagnosed population. We find that people who were diagnosed with ADHD have lower credit scores and more arrears. These arrears are often related to minor items like parking tickets or TV fee,” Ben-David said.

People with ADHD are already more likely to die by suicide than their peers who do not have ADHD. But this study found that adults with ADHD, who were at the highest risk of default, were around four times more likely to die of suicide than people without ADHD who had poor credit and those with ADHD who were at a low risk of default.

“People diagnosed with ADHD, regardless of other comorbidities, are more likely to commit suicide. And committing suicide by people diagnosed with ADHD is more likely to be related to deteriorating financials,” Ben-David told Theravive.

The researchers found that men with ADHD experienced a significant increase in unpaid debts in the three years preceding suicide. The same was not found in women.

“People with ADHD have difficulty with planning ahead, avoiding impulsive behavior, and staying organized. These two skills are necessary for maintaining good financial standing, for example pay bills, rent, credit cards on time,” Ben-David said.

The authors say their research suggests more should be done to address the financial distress experienced by those living with ADHD.

Although the study was of a Swedish population, the researchers say the findings are still applicable to the United States.

“In the US, diagnosis rates of ADHD are significantly higher for a number of reasons for example over-diagnosis, different standards of diagnosis. Because of the different levels in ADHD diagnosis, we expect that our results are likely to reflect the situation among the most severe cases of ADHD in the US,” Ben-David said.

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Elizabeth Pratt is a medical journalist and producer. Her work has appeared on Healthline, The Huffington Post, Fox News, The Australian Broadcasting Corporation, The Sydney Morning Herald, News.com.au, Escape, The Cusp and Skyscanner. You can read more of her articles [here](#). Or learn more about Elizabeth and contact her via her LinkedIn and Twitter profiles.

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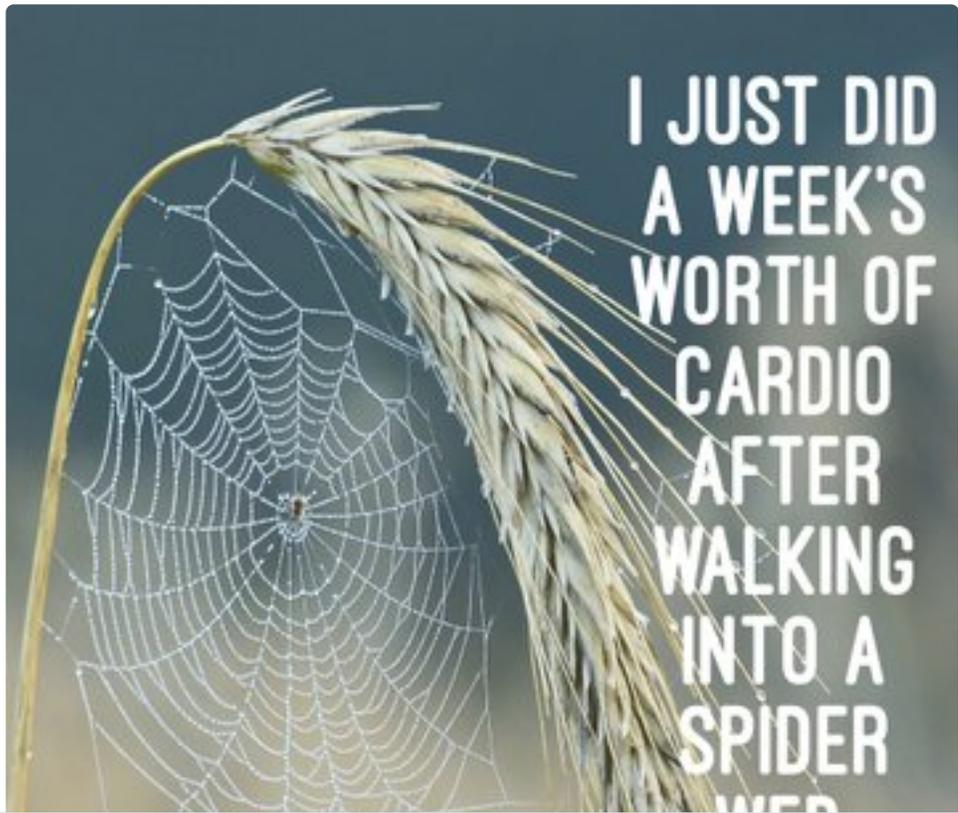
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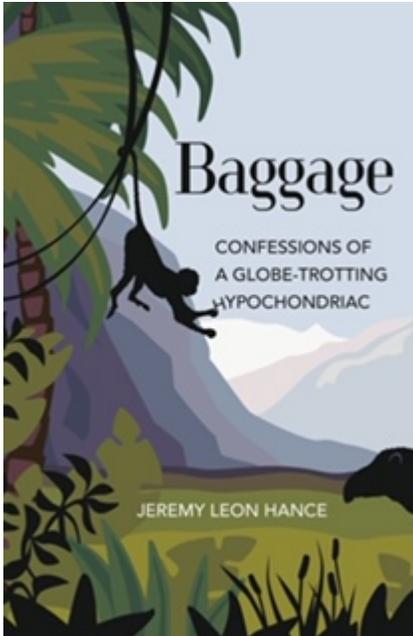
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