Lonely and depressed elderly cause for worry

A new study of the elderly in Singapore has tossed up good and bad news about growing old.

The good news is that people are not only living longer, but also living healthier. Physical problems associated with old age that used to hit people in their 60s now set in only for those in their 80s.

The bad news? Although they are physically all right, many elderly people are lonely, sad or depressed. And this is so even for those living at home with family members.

It gives cause for concern and action, as Singapore’s elderly population is set to grow sharply in the coming years, say National University Health System experts behind the study.

“Families sometimes take sadness and loneliness for granted in their elderly, saying it’s a part of growing old,” said Associate Professor Rathin Mahendran.

“That should not be the case.”

Raising another red flag, her colleague, Associate Professor Kua Ee Heok, said: “The big concern is that a rise in elderly depression could cause suicide rates to spike too.”

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Older people now fitter than before

The 80s may be the new 60s. A new study of 412 people aged 75 and above has shown that people are living longer and healthier lives. While only one-fourth of older adults over age 60 have been found to be in poor health, the study shows that one-fourth of people aged 75 and above are in good health, according to researchers.

The study, done by researchers from the National University of Singapore’s Department of Psychological Medicine, also found that older adults who are physically active are more likely to report good health than those who are sedentary.

If you are engaged in regular physical activity, you are more likely to have a better quality of life, said Dr. Sue Phan, a principal investigator on the study. "Physical activity is not only good for your health, but also for your mental well-being.""..."