



老年精神健康和腦退化症風險

老年抑鬱症與出現腦退化症的風險增加有所關聯。¹ 有抑鬱症的長者有更高機會受糖尿病、² 心血管和腦血管疾病影響，這些都是慢性腦血管栓塞引起的腦退化症和阿爾茨海默症的風險因素。^{3,4} 相比沒有抑鬱症的長者，有抑鬱症的長者的整體健康較為不理想。⁴ 研究估算他們有兩倍的發展腦退化症的風險。⁵

除了抑鬱症，研究亦發現焦慮同樣增加發展腦退化症的風險。一項在瑞士進行的孿生子研究在 1984 至 2012 年期間追蹤 1,082 名 50 歲或以上人士，顯示焦慮症狀是發展腦退化症的風險因素。⁶ 研究團隊估計焦慮或會引致長期壓力，從而損害負責記憶及執行功能的海馬體和前額。另一項關於一般長者的研究⁷則指出，焦慮程度愈高，在三年的追縱期間出現情節及語言記憶的退化幅度相對較大。研究人員指出焦慮症狀可能擾亂荷爾蒙分泌令注意力集中到恐懼和威脅相關的資訊，因而損害海馬體功能和語言表現。

抑鬱、焦慮和發展腦退化症風險的關聯，顯示長者保持心理健康的重要性。可是長者或會因長期痛症、⁸ 經濟困難，⁹ 以及居住環境的限制¹⁰ 等因素而感到難以保持心理健康。Cerin 及其研究團隊¹⁰ 特別指出香港一些市區環境特徵，包括擠擁、空氣和噪音污染、以及某些社區缺乏綠化及開放空間，均可能導致生活質素欠佳。一項本地社區篩查¹¹ 指出在香港，有 8.3% 的 65 歲或以上人士有臨床上明顯的抑鬱症狀，研究亦推算 8% 本港年屆 60 至 75 歲的人士有焦慮症。¹² 由此可見，香港長者的精神健康問題應被妥善應對，以促使他們能擁有良好的身心健康於社區生活。

靜觀活動如「靜觀瑜伽」和「身體掃描」，¹³ 是藉刻意留意呼吸、思想、身體感官，和日常生活細節使參加者對自己更有意識，鼓勵人建立以不批判的態度將專注力關注在當下經歷。¹⁴ 研究顯示這練習有助一般人舒緩壓力、抑鬱和焦慮，¹⁵ 亦有效協助有抑鬱症的人士緩減症狀。¹⁶ 應用在腦退化症方面，Katz 和他的研究團隊¹⁷ 指出壓力是長者發展輕度認知障礙的可改變風險因素，並進一步主張以靜觀相關的訓練預防認知衰退。通過靜觀活動長者或能發展自我關懷、平和¹⁸ 及靈活的心境，¹³ 從而以正面的自我態度去包容不愉快的情緒，以更能駕馭生命中不同的挑戰，同時減低出現認知衰退的機會。



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