



## Socializing Is Healthy: Talking About It with Your Patient

When you talk with your patients, ask them about their personal relationships, how frequently they interact with friends and family members, and any feelings of loneliness. You could help them improve their physical health and reduce their risk for premature death.

Dr. Julianne Holt-Lunstad was a speaker at the **First Symposium on Social Isolation and Loneliness** coordinated by Triple-S, where she presented scientific data showing that social isolation and loneliness cause damage to our physical health. In fact, social isolation increases the likelihood of premature death by 29%. Dr. Holt-Lunstad's research, which involved a long-term study over 7 years, has demonstrated that social isolation is as harmful to our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and has also linked it to a higher risk for cardiac disease, diabetes, anxiety, and depression.

Dr. Holt-Lunstad —director of the Society, Behavior & Health academic program at Brigham Young University, as well as a professor and founding chair of the Scientific Advisory Council of the Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness— conducted a meta-analysis with the objective of establishing the general and relative magnitude of social isolation and loneliness and examining possible mitigators. These studies provided quantitative data on mortality as affected by loneliness, social isolation, or living alone. The results were consistent across genders, duration of follow-up, and region in the world, and they determined that a person's initial health condition has an impact on final findings. However, results differ based on the age of the participants, with social impairments being a greater predictor of death among samples whose average age was 65 years.

"We know social isolation and loneliness have become serious public health issues in England, Japan, and the United States," stated Triple-S CEO Roberto García Rodríguez during his participation in the First Symposium on Social Isolation and Loneliness held last March. "The more we delve into the topic, the more we understand its relevance and importance for our public health. Therefore, we have decided to serve as a catalytic agent to raise awareness and educate on this situation and its consequences for our health and take action," he pointed out. In fact, several nations around the world have suggested that we're facing an epidemic of loneliness. The World Health Organization explicitly acknowledges the importance of social connections. The challenge we face now is establishing what we can do about it.

Socializing is healthy. Talk with your patients and ask them about their social habits and any feelings of loneliness.

Promote group activities and human relationships, which scientific data has shown will lead to a longer life and a better physical health.