Loneliness, quality of life and health inequalities

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An outline of this presentation

- Description of loneliness

- Description of the associations of loneliness with health, life satisfaction and quality of life

- Multivariate analysis of loneliness as an outcome

- Multivariate analysis of health, life satisfaction and quality of life using loneliness as a predictor
Loneliness: the measure

Four selected items from the UCLA-revised loneliness scale contained in the self-completion questionnaire of ELSA:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The next questions are about how you feel about different aspects of your life. For each one, please say how often you feel that way.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hardly ever or never</td>
<td>Some of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you feel you lack companionship?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you feel left out?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you feel isolated from others?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you feel in tune with the people around you?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Loneliness in ELSA wave2 at a glance

Feel lack of companionship
Feel left out
Feel isolated from others
Feel in tune with people ...

- Often
- Some of the time
- Hardly ever or never

ELSA English Longitudinal Study of Ageing

UCL
Loneliness by age

Feel lack of companionship
Feel left out
Feel isolated from others

Age groups
% often/some of the time

ELSA
English Longitudinal Study of Ageing
Loneliness by age and sex

"Feel lack companionship" by age and sex

"Feel isolated from others" by age and sex

Age groups

ELSA English Longitudinal Study of Ageing

UCL
Loneliness by wealth

% often/some of the time

Feel lack of companionship
Feel left out
Feel isolated from others

Quintiles of wealth

Poorest quintile
2nd quintile
3rd quintile
4th quintile
Wealthiest quintile

ELSA
English Longitudinal Study of Ageing

UCL
Loneliness by wealth and age

"Feel lack companionship" by age and total wealth

"Feel isolated from others" by age and total wealth

Quintiles of wealth

ELSA English Longitudinal Study of Ageing
Loneliness by marital status

Feel lack of companionship
Feel left out
Feel isolated from others

Single (never married)
Married (first and only marriage)
Remarried (second or later marriage)
Separated/Divorced
Widowed

ELSA English Longitudinal Study of Ageing
Loneliness by living with a spouse/partner and closeness of the relationship with the spouse/partner

Feel lack of companionship
Feel left out
Feel isolated from others

% often/some of the time

Not living with a spouse
Not very close relationship
Very close relationship

Relationship with the spouse/partner

ELSA
English Longitudinal Study of Ageing
“Feel left out” by age and frequency of contact with children

Age groups

% often/some of the time

52–59
60–74
75+

Anything but frequent contact with children
Frequent contact with children (either face-to-face or over the phone)
Frequent contact with children (both face-to-face and over the phone)

ELSA
English Longitudinal Study of Ageing
Loneliness by having close friends and closeness to them

Feel lacking companionship
Feel left out
Feel isolated from others

% often/some of the time

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70
No friends
No close friends
1 close friend
2–6 close friends
7–10 close friends

Relationships with friends

ELSA
English Longitudinal Study of Ageing
Self-rated health and loneliness
Long-standing illness by loneliness

- Feel lacking companionship
- Feel left out
- Feel isolated from

% with long-standing illness

- Often/some of the time
- Hardly ever/never
Ageing experiences and loneliness

Feel lacking companionship
Feel left out
Feel isolated from others

- Negative experience
- Neither negative nor positive
- Positive experience

% often/some of the time
Quality of life (CASP-19) mean score by loneliness

Mean CASP-19 score

- Often/Some of the time
- Hardly ever/never

Feel lacking companionship
Feel left out
Feel isolated from others

ELSA English Longitudinal Study of Ageing
…but do all these relationships hold in multivariate analysis?

…does loneliness relate to health outcomes and quality of life over and age, sex, marital status and socioeconomic position?
...explaining loneliness
Loneliness (summary score) as an outcome: linear regression analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Standardized beta regression coefficient</th>
<th>Statistical significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (five-year intervals)</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>.144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (female)</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealth (quintiles of age-standardized total wealth in w1)</td>
<td>.155</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with spouse/partner and closeness to her/him</td>
<td>.309</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with children</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having friends and number of close friends</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with friends</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$R^2 = .174$

ELSIA English Longitudinal Study of Ageing
...using loneliness to explain life satisfaction and quality of life
Loneliness as a predictor of life satisfaction (SWLS): linear regression analysis

Loneliness on its own explains 24.2% of life satisfaction’s variance!

It is the most significant predictor of life satisfaction in the fully adjusted model (adjusted for age, sex, total wealth, relationship with the partner and friendships).

The final model explains 34.5% of the life satisfaction (SWLS) variance.
Loneliness as a predictor of quality of life (CASP-19): linear regression analysis

Loneliness on its own explains 33.5% of CASP-19’s variance!!

It remains the most significant predictor of quality of life (CASP-19) in the fully adjusted model

The final model explains 47.7% of CASP-19 variance!
...is loneliness the key to explain older people’s happiness, wellbeing and quality of life in western societies?
...using loneliness to explain health outcomes
Loneliness as a predictor of self-rated health and long-standing illness: regression analysis

Loneliness on its own explains 8.5% of the self-rated health’s variance.

It remains a significant predictor of self-rated health in the fully adjusted model.

Loneliness is similarly an significant predictor of long-standing illness or disability.
Loneliness as a predictor of self-reported hypertension and diabetes (prevalence): logistic regression analysis

Loneliness is, also, a significant predictor of hypertension and diabetes after adjustment for all selected covariates.

The same applies for glycated haemoglobin.
Loneliness as a predictor of other health outcomes: regression analysis

Body mass index (BMI): association becomes non-significant once adjusted for wealth

Waist-hip ratio (WHR): not related

Fibrinogen: strong and significant association in the fully adjusted model

C-Reactive Protein: association becomes marginally non-significant once adjusted for wealth
Conclusions

Spouse/partner, wealth and friends: key factors for loneliness.

Loneliness: key factor for older people’s quality of life, life satisfaction (well-being) and health

Therefore, it should be considered as an important correlate of health and quality of life.
Thank you for your attention!