

## Real-Time Health News

For people suffering from chronic back pain, facing a few setbacks in life might actually ease their troubles with the persistent condition.

According to research from Dr. Mark Seery and his team at the University of Buffalo, “some” adversity could protect and benefit a patient with chronic back pain, as opposed to having experienced none or many difficult moments over time.

Seery, an assistant professor of psychology at the university, says these individuals have less physical impairment and visit doctors’ offices and health clinics less often to due their back problems.

The study, which will appear in the journal *Pain*, looked at almost 400 patients with chronic back pain, and from 2001 to 2003 the participants were asked to report their health statuses and previous life events.

Researchers collected data from the patients who answered questions about exposure to 37 different traumatic events such as injury to themselves or a loved one, sexual cruelty, violence, grief, social issues and relationship stresses.

Information was also given about the individuals’ plight associated with their chronic back pain, including immobility, disability status from employers, pain treatment, medication use and prevalence of psychiatric disorders.

Seery reports that his results suggest psychological problems that could potentially stem from chronic back pain might be prevented because of exposure to hardships, and his team found no other explanation for those findings.

“It may be that the experience of prior, low-levels of adversity may cause sufferers to reappraise stressful and potentially debilitating symptoms of CBP as minor annoyances,” he said in a statement.

The researchers say that resilience and the psychology associated with reoccurring pain has not been discussed much in previous work, but this is likely the factor impacting their results.

“Chronic back pain can be very debilitating, both physically and psychologically,”



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Seery tells AOL Health. “Being unable to fully engage in one’s normal activities can seriously affect a person’s perceptions of their quality of life. In addition to the psychological costs of CBP, there is also evidence that psychological factors can influence the CBP itself, such as how long it persists and its responsiveness to treatment.”

Dr. Julie Silver, AOL Health’s physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist and author of “Chronic Pain and the Family,” says that doctors should always look at pain as both a physical and psychological thing.

“It’s hard to separate the two,” she tells AOL Health. “If someone is engaged in a really fun activity, he won’t pay as much attention to his pain and thus perceives that he has less pain — even though the physical aspects haven’t changed.”

Seery says that although prior thoughts were that troubling life events equate to more severe symptoms of chronic back pain, it appears now that “some” trauma is actually the most beneficial.

“Our findings our consistent with the hypothesis that experiencing some difficulties in life can promote a general resilience —

essentially an ability to more successfully deal with future difficulties,” he tells AOL Health.

Silver tells says that pain sees no prejudice and is a mostly unavoidable factor for everyone.

“Most people live with some type of pain, especially as they age,” she says. “Whether people suffer from migraines or arthritis or low back pain or something else altogether, we all have quite a bit of personal experience with pain.”

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