

UPBEAT-UK: a programme of research into the relationship between coronary heart disease and depression in primary care patients

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

Many people with coronary heart disease (CHD) are depressed and research on people who have had a heart attack found that depression increases the chance of further heart attacks. The UPBEAT-UK team conducted research with people on general practitioner CHD registers in 33 south London practices to: examine any link between CHD, depression and worse future heart disease; and develop case management by practice nurses for people with CHD and depression.

We followed 803 people with CHD for up to 3 years, assessing them for depression, chest pain and worsening of heart disease, and also measured care costs. We asked patients, GPs and nurses how people with CHD and depression should be treated. From this, we developed care designed for each person called 'personalised care' (PC). We tested it in 41 people (while 40 people received their usual care from GPs) with chest pain and depression, to assess how acceptable it is, whether or not it helps and what the costs would be. PC was acceptable to people, and those who received it reported less chest pain 6 and 12 months later. Costs were lower following PC but the difference was not statistically significant.

Just under half of those with CHD had chest pain. Depression was frequent, but anxiety was more common and increased the chances of both heart attacks and death.

We conclude that further research is needed to understand the links between anxiety, chest pain and heart disease, and to further develop our promising findings that PC can be helpful in reducing chest pain in general practice.

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