

Recruitment for a Study in Aging, Memory & Social Connection

UC San Diego

Center for Healthy Aging
Stein Institute for
Research on Aging

by Barton Palmer & Allison Williams

There has been rising interest in the lay press and professional journals about the “epidemic of loneliness”. On one hand, the capacity to experience acute loneliness is likely a very adaptive characteristic, and there is some data consistent with the idea that this capacity has been favored by natural selection. Specifically, acute loneliness can serve as a social motivating signal that increases the individual’s drive to reach out and connect with others in ways that can be beneficial for survival and reproduction. However, very much analogous to the distinction between acute vs. chronic pain, while the capacity to feel acute loneliness can foster survival, chronic loneliness can become a problem for health and well-being.

A number of studies have found that people experiencing chronic loneliness and social isolation are at greater risk for a range of medical conditions, including increased risk of memory and other cognitive concerns, and possible dementia. The causes or mechanisms underlying such associations are not yet fully known, but some candidates being evaluated include direct biological ones such as the biological effects of sustained stress responses from chronic loneliness, and indirect ones such as the effects of social isolation on health behaviors and health-related resources.

Among the questions that remain about the association of loneliness and cognitive concerns is whether there might be adaptive patterns of acute loneliness that can be identified to help persons experiencing chronic loneliness. For example, are there helpful responses to acute loneliness that might be taught to persons prone to chronic loneliness? If so, a second question would be whether learning those adaptive responses can reduce subsequent risk of transitioning from mild cognitive concerns to dementia. Dr. Barton Palmer and his team are currently conducting an initial investigation regarding the first part of these questions. Specifically, they are interested in identifying adaptive and maladaptive patterns of loneliness with daily assessments over the course of several weeks among adults with mild cognitive impairment. They are also examining the association of levels and patterns of loneliness to current cognitive performance, and to some “biomarkers” that reflect inflammatory responses to chronic stress.

Aging, Memory, & Social Connection Study

with Barton Palmer
& Allison Williams

We are looking...

- for people between the ages of 51-90 years
- experiencing mild cognitive concerns without substantial impairment in daily functioning.

Participation in this study...

- Takes place over the course of a month
- **Involves two in-person visits**
 - (clinical interview of mental health history, measures of memory, concentration, and other thinking skills, questionnaires regarding loneliness and social connection, as well as measures of feelings of depression, anxiety, and positive and negative feelings)
- **A blood-draw**
 - (about 2 tablespoons) for blood-based measures related to our study questions.
- **Participants will be lent a smartphone** on which they will complete twice-daily smartphone surveys for a month
- **A Fitbit device**, that will help us identify patterns of loneliness and physical activity to better understand how people respond to feelings of loneliness.
- **May be compensated up to \$310.**

If you are interested participating in or learning more about this study, please contact the study coordinator, Allison Williams, via phone at (858) 412-7560 or via email at apw010@ucsd.edu.

Don't forget to register for our next Public Lecture with Dr. Zlatar on March 23rd



Dr. Zvinka Zlatar
Department of Psychiatry

PUBLIC LECTURE

"PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND BRAIN HEALTH IN AGING"

Please join us for a talk with clinical psychologist, Dr. Zvinka Zlatar. Q & A to follow.



🕒 4-5pm

📅 Thurs, March 23

📍 Zoom

[Register Now!](#)

Dr. Zlatar received her PhD in clinical psychology from the University of Florida, with a focus on adult neuropsychology/geropsychology. She completed her APA-accredited clinical psychology internship at the University of California, Los Angeles (Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior), focusing on the neuropsychological assessment of older adults and Spanish-speaking adults. She then completed a postdoctoral fellowship in neurocognitive aging at the University of California, San Diego with an emphasis on imaging the neural substrates of physical activity in older adults. She is a faculty member in the Department of Psychiatry at UCSD, where she develops lifestyle interventions to promote healthy brain and cognitive aging with diverse samples.

Stein Institute presents Public Lecture with Dr. Zlatar
Thursday, March 23rd
4-5pm
via Zoom



We Need Your Support!

When you give to the UC San Diego Center for Healthy Aging and the Stein Institute for Research on Aging, you're making the decision to support **the pursuit of a healthier, longer life for you and your loved ones**. Please **make a gift** to help sustain and expand our successful aging programs.

[GIVE NOW](#)



[Visit our website](#)