News Release

BLACK DOG INSTITUTE

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WORRYING HELPS HEART PATIENTS

Australian researchers have made the surprising finding that patients who are worriers are likely to be better off after being hospitalised with an acute heart condition.

Worry, they say, can be both normal and constructive.

Results suggest that heart patients who worry may attend to their health needs more regularly and conscientiously. They may take their proper medication and may even be more proactive with their GP or other health practitioners.

The study, conducted by the Black Dog Institute, challenges the published literature that patients with anxiety and depression in these cases are worse off.

According to Professor Gordon Parker, Executive Director of the Black Dog Institute, people with GAD (General Anxiety Disorder) are commonly recipients of gratuitous advice to "stop worrying" and that they "will worry themselves to their grave".

The Institute, he said, conducted a study, of nearly 500 people hospitalised with an acute coronary syndrome.

The study is titled "THE IMPACT OF DIFFERING ANXIETY DISORDERS ON OUTCOME FOLLOWING AN ACUTE CORONARY SYNDROME; TIME TO START WORRYING". It has been published in the official publication of the Anxiety Disorders Association of America, *Depression and Anxiety.*

Professor Parker said that with the various psychosocial risk factors for cardiac disease, depression had received the most attention and linked to increasing the risk of both developing cardiovascular disease and having a worse outcome following acute coronary syndrome. Anxiety has also been so identified.

"Links between anxiety and outcome following a heart attack are likely to depend on the 'type' of anxiety, with 'panic anxiety' worsening outcome and 'worrying-type 'anxiety not being such a risk factor.

"Although demonstrated in many studies, links have been inconsistent," Professor Parker said.

"The interesting outcome from our study is that having GAD may be 'protec tive' and be associated with an improved cardiac outcome for patients.

"If GAD encourages people with a cardiac condition to attend to their health priorities, its association with a somewhat superior post cardiac outcome in this study, is constructive."

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