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Association between Virus Exposure and Depression in US Adults

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Abstract

Mood disorders are common mental illnesses. Among the factors associated with major depression are exposures to infectious diseases including hepatitis C, influenza, varicella-zoster, and herpes viruses. In this study, we sought to evaluate further associations between viral exposure and depression. From the US Center for Disease Control's National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, we obtained data about depression status, antidepressant use, exposure to hepatitis A, hepatitis B, herpes simplex virus type 1, herpes simplex virus type 2, human immunodeficiency virus, and cytomegalovirus, and sociodemographic variables and evaluated associations between depression and viral exposure in adjusted multivariable models. Herpes simplex virus type 2 was associated with an increased risk of depression, whereas hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and herpes simplex virus type 1 were not. Higher cytomegalovirus antibody levels were associated with depression in subjects seropositive for cytomegalovirus. In conclusion, exposure to herpes simplex virus type 2 and possibly cytomegalovirus are associated with depression in an adult US sample.

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