

Special Issue on Loneliness and Health: Understanding and overcoming challenges in times of crisis and beyond

Background

While loneliness has been shown to be a key factor for poor health, it can also motivate individuals to reach out to others and mobilize social support. Although being alone for some time can have positive effects on an individual's personal development (e.g., by building personal strengths or sparking creativity), not feeling truly understood and connected to others may result in the adverse feeling of loneliness. Research shows, neither the number of people with whom one is acquainted or friends (social network size), nor concrete assistance (social support) received by others reliably protect from *feeling* lonely. Those who feel lonely long for satisfying contact to close others, who might, in turn, be limited (e.g., distance, time) in being able to fulfil these needs. In most countries affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, physical distancing policies were introduced for varying periods of time. First studies are indicating trends towards a growing number of people experiencing loneliness during these periods, which might entail further risks for health constraints. While the number of individuals experiencing loneliness across age and gender had been recognized by researchers and politicians even prior to the current pandemic, surprisingly little evidence exists with regards to concrete action in overcoming this societal challenge. A more systematic, theory-driven understanding of loneliness, health and crisis is urgently needed to develop effective interventions against loneliness in times of hardship and beyond.

Special Issue Aims

The goal of this special issue is to bring together a set of state-of-the-science articles which review, empirically research and guide loneliness-related issues worldwide. This can include research in psychology and related disciplines (e.g., health promotion, public/global health), examining phenomena related – but NOT restricted – to the Covid-19 pandemic, randomized controlled trials and evidence-based conclusions for future actions. Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

- ★ Differential impact of loneliness, being alone and/or (lack of) social support over time on physical and/or mental health across the lifespan.
- ★ Examination of co- and multi-morbidity of health outcomes in lonely populations and those overcoming loneliness.
- ★ Functional effects of loneliness as a “pressure to change” (e.g., communication, social mobilization, initiation of social activities) on future cognitive, emotional and behavioral outcomes.
- ★ Innovative (e.g., digital) interventions to alleviate loneliness and its associated maladaptive cognitions (e.g., buffering the effects of crisis).
- ★ Experimental effects of lifestyle interventions on loneliness.
- ★ New and innovative research methods to better understand the relationships between loneliness and health and vice versa.

The special issue “Loneliness and Health” welcomes the following manuscript submission formats:

- ★ Original articles in basic and applied research with longitudinal data
- ★ Cohort studies with different measurement points
- ★ Randomized Controlled Trials and other experimental tests
- ★ Systematic reviews
- ★ Meta-analyses

Manuscript Submission

Please email an **abstract** (including finalized data set and analyses with no more than 500 words) for your proposed submission by **June 14, 2021** to one of the Special Issue Editors, Lisa Marie Warner (lisa.warner@medicalschooll-berlin.de) or Sonia Lippke (s.lippke@jacobs-university.de). Abstracts will be pre-reviewed by the editors. Potential contributors will be selected based on the originality and rigor of the work, fit to the issue, as well as diversity of topics. Authors who are selected to develop full manuscripts will be notified by June 30, 2021 and given three months to submit their **full manuscript** through the journal manuscript submission portal via <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/aphw> by **September 30, 2021**. Manuscripts meeting the above-mentioned criteria will be referred for blinded peer review. Manuscripts must be prepared according to the Author Guidelines located at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/17580854/homepage/forauthors.html>.

Guest Editors

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We look forward to receiving your abstracts and manuscripts!