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Health News

Study: Depressed, lonely elderly most apt to be defrauded

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Most psychologically vulnerable with the highest levels of depression and lowest levels of social-needs fulfillment, experienced higher levels of fraud compared to those that were not vulnerable psychologically. Bill Greenblatt UPI

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DETROIT, April 27 (UPI) -- Elder exploitation -- such as telemarketing scams, fake home repairs, check scams and identity theft -- costs U.S. seniors \$3 billion a year, researchers say.

Lead author Peter Lichtenberg, director of Wayne State University's Institute of Gerontology, in collaboration with Illinois Institute of Technology, said the study included 4,440 participants.

The study, published in Clinical Gerontologist, found the most psychologically vulnerable -- with the highest levels of depression and lowest levels of social-needs fulfillment -- experienced higher levels of fraud compared to those who were not vulnerable psychologically.

"The combination of high depression and low social-status fulfillment was associated with a 226 percent increase in fraud prevalence in this population," Lichtenberg said in a statement. "This

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supports our theory that depressive symptoms and lack of social-needs fulfillment have an effect on fraud prediction, and serves as a reminder to clinical gerontologists how psychological vulnerability can affect older adults' lives in a variety of ways."

The research team recommended this population be assessed for the potential of financial exploitation, and the assessment should be a regular part of clinicians' tool kits when working with highly vulnerable people.

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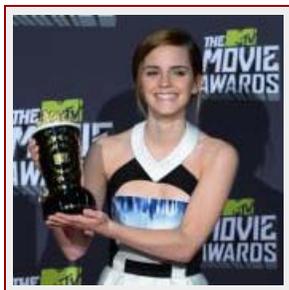
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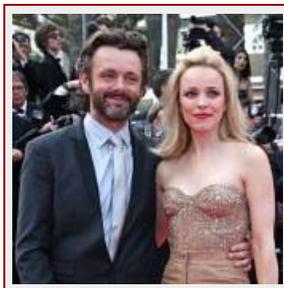
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