

TMS TRENDS

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TRANSITION FROM DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME LEADS TO DEPRESSION

"The year has 16 months: November, December, January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, November, November, November," writes the Danish poet Henrik Nordbrandt in a disheartening comment on the month we have just entered.

Nordbrandt is not the only one suffering in November. A recently published study documents that the number of people who are diagnosed with depression at psychiatric hospitals in Denmark increases immediately after the transition from daylight saving time to standard time.

The study is based on analysis of 185,419 depression diagnoses registered in The Central Psychiatric Research Register between 1995 and 2012. According to Søren D. Østergaard from Aarhus University Hospital in Risskov, the increase in depression rates is too pronounced to be coincidental.

"We are relatively certain that it is the transition from daylight saving time to standard time that causes the increase in the number of depression diagnoses and not, for example, the change in the length of the day or bad weather. In fact, we take these phenomena into account in our analyses," says Søren D. Østergaard.

He also points out that even though the study is based on analysis of relatively severe depressions diagnosed at psychiatric hospitals, there is no reason to believe that the time transition only affects the propensity to develop more severe forms of depression.

"We expect that the entire spectrum of severity is affected by the transition from daylight saving time to standard time, and since depression is a highly prevalent illness, an increase of eight per cent corresponds to many cases," says Søren D. Østergaard.

The study does not identify the underlying mechanism triggering the marked increase, but the researchers point to some possible causes.

"We probably benefit less from the daylight in the morning between seven and eight, because many of us are either in the shower, eating breakfast or sitting in a car or bus on the way to work or school. When we get home and have spare time in the afternoon, it is already dark," explains Søren D. Østergaard.

"Furthermore, the transition to standard time is likely to be associated with a negative psychological effect as it very clearly marks the coming of a period of long, dark and cold days," says Søren D. Østergaard.

Why are the results of the study important? The researcher from Aarhus University is not in doubt: "Our results should give rise to increased awareness of depression in the weeks following the transition to standard time. This is especially true for people with a tendency towards depression -- as well as their relatives. Furthermore the healthcare professionals who diagnose and treat depression should also take our results into consideration," says Søren D. Østergaard.

We turn our clocks back on **Sunday, November 6th** this year. Many people are excited by the thought of an extra hour of sleep, but the loss of an hour of daylight can take a toll on mental health. The results of this study beg for awareness from patients and clinicians alike to stay ahead of the depressive symptoms that may arise during this time of year.

Here at the TMS Institute of Pennsylvania, we wish you and your loved ones a safe and

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

