Study Links TV Watching and Mortality Rates

The Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle Study reported up to 80 percent increased risk in mortality due to prolonged television viewing. Scientists found that a one-hour increment of television viewing daily increased all-cause mortality by one in ten people and mortality from cardiovascular disease by nearly one in five.

When the viewing time per day is greater, the rates of mortality also reflect this. With over four hours of viewing time per day the scientists reported 46 percent increase in the risk of all-case mortality and 80 percent increase in the risk of death related to cardiovascular disease.

According to the scientists, the average person from the UK and Australia watches three hours of television per day. From the 8,800 Australian adults studied during the five-year period, 284 deaths occurred, 84 due to cardiovascular disease.

This study is different than others in the past as it considered mortality instead of the biomarkers in cardiometabolic risk. Also, television viewing was independent from traditional risk factors such as smoking, blood pressure, cholesterol, and diet, as well as leisure-time exercise and waist circumference.

The study was funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council and received in-kind support from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Findings were released Jan. 11 in Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association.

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