



Rapid Biological Aging

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Leukocyte telomere length (LTL) is a biological marker of systemic aging in humans and a measure commonly used to study disease risk in human populations. In considering the negative health impacts of discrimination, recent research by Lee et al. (2017) investigates the relationship between discrimination against African Americans and any potential effects it may have on LTL.

The scientific findings are clear: high levels of racial discrimination are associated with shorter LTL even after adjusting for varied sociodemographic, health, and mental health factors. Since increased discrimination is associated with shorter telomere lengths and LTL is an indicator of biological aging and disease risk, the data suggest that discrimination accelerates biological aging and generates vulnerability to disease in African Americans. This finding fits well into the reality of African American adults who experience disproportionately more diabetes, cardiovascular disease, premature aging, and hypertension than those from other racial groups (Lee et al., 2017).

Sources

Lee, D. B., Kim, E. S., & Neblett, E. W. (2017). The link between discrimination and telomere length in African American adults. *Health Psychology, 36*(5), 458–467.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/hea0000450>