CultureCase

Frequent attendance at cultural events associated with reduced cancer mortality

This research was conducted by **Lars Olov Bygren and five others** at **Universities in Sweden, Norway and the USA**.

Summary

This paper describes a long-term study looking at correlations between taking part in certain cultural activities and cancer mortality. In general, people in urban areas who frequently attended cultural events (cinemas, theatre, art galleries, live music shows, and museums) were less likely to die from cancer than those who did not attend cultural events.

Frequent attendees showed fewer cancer-related deaths

9011 participants were selected at random from all over Sweden to take part in this study that lasted nearly 12 years. Interviews were conducted in person or by telephone to obtain information including frequency of attendance at cultural events. Based on their answers, the participants were grouped into three categories: frequent, moderate and rare attendees. After taking into account variables such as smoking, physical activity and education, the researchers concluded that in urban areas only, cancer mortality rates were higher in rare attendees compared to frequent attendees.

Stress and the immune system may be important

The authors draw from previously published data and hypothesise that engaging in cultural activities may help reduce stress and boost the immune system, which in turn could have an effect on cancer mortality. It is unclear why

this effect is only observed in urban and not rural areas. On the other hand, many other potentially important factors were not taken into account in this study, leading to the possibility that there is no true causality in the relationship between attending cultural events and health. The authors suggest a more stringent and controlled approach for future studies.

This summary is by **Elena Popa, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate.**

Keywords

survival **attendance** **Sweden** **survey** **health**

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