

# Sex and Gender Characteristics of Adults on Hemodialysis Experiencing Depression and Depressive Symptoms: A Scoping Review

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**ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

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**Review Stage at time of this submission** - Completed but not published.

**Conflicts of interest** - None declared.

**INPLASY registration number:** INPLASY202550035

**Amendments** - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 13 May 2025 and was last updated on 25 May 2025.

**INTRODUCTION**

**Review question / Objective** To describe sex and gender characteristics in adults and living with depression or depressive symptoms treated with hemodialysis.

**Rationale** People treated with maintenance hemodialysis are at a higher risk of experiencing depression with approximately one in five reporting depressive symptoms. Depression is linked to risk of hospitalization, poor dialysis adherence, missed medications, and inadequate nutrition. Sociodemographic variables, including sex (biological factors) and gender (sociocultural factors), influence depression in individuals undergoing hemodialysis. Sex and gender distinctions are crucial to understanding how depression can co-exist with kidney failure however; these have not been fully addressed. Integration of sex and gender considerations in depression among individuals undergoing

hemodialysis could improve healthcare access, reduce potential biases among healthcare professionals, promote equity in clinical decision-making, and result in more personalized and effective patient care.

**Condition being studied** Describing sex and gender characteristics in adults and living with depression or depressive symptoms treated with hemodialysis.

**METHODS**

**Search strategy** The literature search strategies were developed with assistance from a health sciences librarian. The search strategy was developed and conducted in April 2024 using the following electronic databases: Cochrane Library, Embase, Medline, CINAHL, and PsycINFO. A sample list of the search terms used included: renal; nephrology; kidney or dialysis; h? emodialysis; adult; elder; grown up; people;

patient; client; individual; population; society; group; depress; sex; gender; male; female; man; woman; masculin\*; and feminin\*. Each database was searched separately.

**Participant or population** Adults, eighteen years and older, treated with hemodialysis, and experiencing depression or depressive symptoms.

**Intervention** Due to the nature and focus of the study, there was no intervention.

**Comparator** Due to the nature of the study, a comparator was not required for inclusion. The following categories will guide data extraction: 1. Describe the study including methods, study aim, sample characteristics and size, prevalence of depression or depressive symptoms in males/females/men/women (%), duration on hemodialysis, depressive symptoms assessment/screening tool, depressive symptoms assessment/screening tool cut-off point applied, definition of gender and/or sex stated in study, sex/gender used interchangeably in the study.

**Study designs to be included** We followed the scoping review framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley and revised by Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien. This scoping review framework includes the following stages: identifying the research question/purpose, identifying relevant studies, selecting studies, charting the data, and reporting results.

**Eligibility criteria** We included studies that reported sex<sup>1</sup> (male or female) and/or gender<sup>2</sup> (woman/man/gender diverse<sup>3</sup>) characteristics of individuals receiving hemodialysis and living with depression or depressive symptoms. We did not limit our inclusion criteria to individuals with a diagnosis of depression but also included those reporting self-identified depressive symptoms. The dialysis modalities included hemodialysis offered in in-centre and satellite units. The study population were adults, eighteen years and older, treated with hemodialysis, and experiencing depression or depressive symptoms. The review included all relevant peer-reviewed primary research and reviews/syntheses to avoid publication bias. Geographical limits were not included to capture studies throughout the world. Studies were limited to those published in English from 2000 to 2024. We excluded studies that focused on other mental health symptoms or diagnoses. Additionally we excluded studies that reported individuals with acute kidney injury, undergoing peritoneal dialysis, kidney transplant recipients, receiving palliative, conservative or supportive care, and those in the

pre-dialysis stage. Grey literature, editorials, and conference abstracts were excluded from our study as well as hemodialysis data that could not be extracted from a study with participants on both hemodialysis and other dialysis modalities.

1. Sex refers to and captures biological attributes in humans that are primarily associated with physical and physiological features

2. Gender is a social construct of masculinity and femininity, referring to behaviors, expressions, as well as identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender diverse individuals

3. Gender diverse pertains to transgender or gender neutral or non-binary or cisgender or gender fluid, or agender, or pangender or gender queer.

**Information sources** Cochrane Library, Embase, Medline, CINAHL, and PsycINFO.

**Main outcome(s)** Results will be written narratively, there are no outcomes per se. The purpose of the scoping review is to describe the characteristics of sex and/or gender in adults receiving hemodialysis and living with depression or depressive symptoms.

**Additional outcome(s)** None.

**Data management** We used Covidence systematic review software to select studies based on our inclusion and exclusion criteria and screen the articles. Two reviewers screened the titles and abstracts, as well as performed the full-text screening with  $\geq 90\%$  agreement. If discrepancies arose over article eligibility, the reviewers discussed to come to a resolution. We conducted the citation chaining from included articles to identify additional information sources. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied during the title, abstract, and full-text screening.

#### Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis

Quality appraisal is not intended to evaluate the scholarly merits of the research.

**Strategy of data synthesis** In the analysis stage, following the scoping review framework, we will developed both a descriptive numerical summary and a thematic analysis. We will present an overview of the extent, nature and distribution of the data mapped in a descriptive numerical table which will summarize basic characteristics of all the studies. We will subsequently organize the studies thematically based on sex and gender-related characteristics observed in individuals with depression or depressive symptoms undergoing hemodialysis. The descriptive numerical summary

will include the overall number of studies, years of publication, geographical location where the studies were conducted, study aim/objective, target population, hemodialysis setting, and type of research study utilized. This section of the analysis will illuminate the predominant research areas, specifically focusing on the study aim/objective, target population, hemodialysis setting, and geographical location. We will adopt an inductive approach to identify themes that integrates both sex and gender characteristics in individuals with depression or depressive symptoms. The resulting data will be thematically analyzed, identifying similarities and differences to fulfill the objectives of our review. By consistently applying this framework to report the findings, we will facilitate meaningful comparisons based on sex and gender characteristics in individuals with depression or depressive symptoms. Two authors will collaboratively review the data and resolve discrepancies through discussion and consensus.

**Subgroup analysis** None.

**Sensitivity analysis** Due to the nature of the study, sensitivity analysis was not performed.

**Language restriction** Studies were limited to those published in English.

**Country(ies) involved** Canada (University of Alberta).

**Keywords** Depression; hemodialysis; sex; gender; adults.

**Dissemination plans** The results will be submitted to an international peer reviewed journal.

#### **Contributions of each author**

Author 1 - Primrose Mharapara - Author 1 drafted and wrote the manuscript.

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Author 2 - Sofia Ahmed - The author revised the manuscript providing content expertise on the subject topic. The author provided feedback and approved the final manuscript.

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