

# **Exploring the influence of religiosity and spirituality on the ability to cope with adverse genetic testing results, and the impact on mental health following genetic risk disclosure for Alzheimer's disease in the REVEAL Study**

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A high degree of religiosity and spirituality (R/S) has been shown to aid in coping with serious life events. Religious involvement is also associated with a better ability to manage stress as well as less substance abuse, anxiety, depression, and suicide in individuals of differing age groups, ethnicities, localities, and medical settings. The aim of this study was to explore how R/S impacts ability to cope with genetic risk assessment, and the impact on the emotional health of individuals learning about their genetic risk. Participants were enrollees of the Risk Evaluation and Education for Alzheimer's Disease (REVEAL) III Study who received a life-time risk estimate for developing Alzheimer's disease (AD). Risk estimates were based on their *APOE* genotype with the  $\epsilon 4$  isoform conferring the highest risk for developing AD. Two hundred and fifty seven participants completed the REVEAL study. *APOE*  $\epsilon 4$  positive participants with greater R/S were more likely to rate their experience with genetic risk assessment as positive. Greater R/S was not associated with a greater perceived ability to cope with their risk estimate and there was no association between degree of R/S and impact on emotional health. This study will contribute to the gaps in literature related to genetic risk communication for AD by exploring the relationship between R/S and risk impact. The findings may provide evidence for R/S as playing an important role in the receipt and processing of certain genetic testing results in a clinical setting.