Written by Olivia Gilbertsen, Staff Writer
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Psychosomatic Medicine Journal of Behavioral Medicine published a recent study saying that gay and bisexual men are less prone to the onset of depressive symptoms.

“Contrary to our expectations, gay and bisexual men had less depressive symptoms and were in better physiological shape than heterosexual men,” Robert-Paul Juster, neuroscientist at McGill University, said.

The study was published last week in the journal Psychosomatic Medicine in Montreal.

The findings of his study mentioned that there was no difference found contrasting women, Juster added.

“The reason why we found this result among men may be due to the fact that the majority of gay and bisexual men had come out of the closet, which might render them resilient,” Juster explained.

The study involved 87 gay, lesbian and bisexual men and women. Questionnaires were used to assess stress and mental health. Juster and his team also measured stress hormone cortisol in saliva as well as chronic stress using allostatic load index.

“Allostatic load represents the wear and tear of chronic stress that is measurable using numerous biomarkers like cholesterol, adrenalin or blood pressure,” he said.

Jason Vazquez, staff psychologist at Student Counseling Services, said the finding that gay men who are out of the closet are less psychologically distressed is consistent with other research in this area.

“Stress tends to affect areas of the brain associated with the immune system. Results from other studies have shown individuals who are exposed to high levels of stress tend to report increased susceptibility to viral infections,” Vazquez added.

These individuals have a higher risk for cardiovascular disease, hypertension, migraines and cluster headaches, he said.

Sexual minorities are considered a population who are more vulnerable to psychosocial stress, Juster explained.

Juster also said most participants of the study were college students and the findings can be generalized to other campuses, including ISU.

“Coming out is a personal choice as well as a transition that is stressful. This study provides a light at the end of the tunnel in the form of a huge weight coming off your shoulders,” Juster said.

There is a limitation to the results of the study.

It may not generalize to more conservative locations, as Montreal is a fairly liberal city with progressive terms of rights and liberties.

Due to this variable, Juster decided to repeat the study looking at states before and after legislation is passed that gives sexual minorities more rights.

Vazquez said when working with students who are dealing with stress or depression, Student Counseling Services suggests they get plenty of sleep, eat well, seek emotional support, exercise and set realistic goals.

“It is important to realize feeling sad, stressed or upset is a normal part of life. If these feelings are persistent and interfering with your daily life, it is important to seek professional help,” he added.

Students can call Student Counseling Services at (309) 438-3655 or call Providing Access to Help if they are in a crisis outside of business hours at (309) 827-4005.