

# Op-Ed Can 1 million women be wrong about happiness and health?

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*Los Angeles Times:*

Do happier people live longer? An article in the British medical journal *Lancet* made headlines this month claiming the answer to that question is no. The researchers based their conclusion on data from the Million Women Study in Britain, and it contradicts a large body of research, not to mention conventional wisdom. Because it was a large study, and the *Lancet* is a well-regarded publication, the message seemed definitive: Happiness doesn't matter for your health.

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But the *Lancet* study is far from definitive. Happiness does matter for your health. A lot. The data the researchers analyzed are indeed interesting and potentially valuable. The Million Women Study surveyed women, ages 50 to 69, on multiple issues and followed them for 10 years. More than 846,000 of the participants answered a question about happiness, and after a decade of follow-up, 4% of them had died. So far, the researchers say the data show that among healthy, first-world women in their 50s, happiness does predict who will die in their 60s, but this effect evaporates once you statistically account for numerous other factors. We believe there are methodological concerns about the study that call this finding into question.

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