**People as Good Medicine**

Recent research takes a more expansive view of potential health risk factors. An interesting example of this new line of research has illuminated the physical dangers of loneliness in stunning detail. In this research, Case and his colleagues studied people who had suffered and survived a heart attack. All 1,200 patients in the study were interviewed three to fifteen days after admission to hospital. Comprehensive medical, personal, and demographic information was collected on each patient, including evidence about their living arrangements: Did the patient alone, or with spouse, children, or friends? The impact of differences on this measure was startling. Over a period of six months, patients who lived with someone else were 79% less likely than isolated patients to experience another heart attack. This finding was independent of age or marital status. Among men and women living alone, the risk of recurrent attack was greater for women. Over the course of four years, the cardiac death rate for isolated patients was 12.4% versus 5.7% for patients living with someone else. Although psychologists believe that being alone is an imperfect measure of loneliness, medical evidence based on this measure strongly suggests that loneliness can pose a danger, not only to psychological health, but to physical health as well.