

Depression and Medical, Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Clinical depression is a serious medical illness that can be treated. The risk of clinical depression is higher in people who also have a serious medical illness, such as heart disease, stroke, cancer or diabetes. However, the warning signs are often discounted by patients and family members. They may assume feeling depressed is normal for people with serious health problems. But, it's a myth that depression is a "normal" reaction to illness. And, it's very important to treat both medical illnesses.

Primary Care Settings and Instances of Missed Depression

- Nearly 74 percent of Americans who seek help for depression go to a primary care physician instead of a mental health professional.
- The rate of depression of those with medical illnesses in primary care settings is about five to 10 percent. Of those hospitalized, the rate is about 10 to 14 percent.
- People with a severe medical condition are more likely to have clinical depression.
- People with depression are in greater distress and are less able to function.
- People with depression are less able to follow a medical plan, hindering their medical care.
- A diagnosis of depression is missed 50 percent of the time in primary care settings.

Why Depression and Medical Illnesses Often Occur Together

- Medical illness may contribute to depression.
- Medically ill people may become depressed in reaction to the diagnosis.
- They may become depressed because of the pain and/or infirmity caused by the illness or treatment.

Frequency of Depression and Medical Illnesses

Heart Disease and Depression

- Depression occurs in 40 to 65 percent of patients who have had a heart attack. It occurs in 18 to 20 percent of people who have heart disease, but have not had a heart attack.
- After a heart attack, people with clinical depression have nearly a four times greater chance of dying within the next six months.
- Men and women with depression are at increased risk for coronary artery disease.

Stroke and Depression

- Ten to 27 percent of stroke survivors suffer from depression, lasting about one year.
- An additional 15 to 40 percent of stroke survivors experience some symptoms of depression within two months after the stroke.
- People with five or more symptoms of depression have a greater than 50 percent chance of dying due to stroke in the next 29 years.

Cancer and Depression

- One in four people with cancer suffer from clinical depression.
- Depression can be mistaken as a side effect of the cancer treatment.

- Depression can be mistaken for the cancer itself. Both can cause eating and sleeping problems, weight loss and lack of energy.

Diabetes and Depression

- People with adult onset diabetes have a 25 percent chance of having depression.
- Depression affects as many as 70 percent of patients with diabetic complications.

Eating Disorders and Depression

- Research shows a strong link between depression and eating disorders in women.

Substance Abuse and Depression

- Research shows that one in three depressed people suffer from substance abuse or dependence.

Common Symptoms of both Depression and Medical Disorders

- Weight loss, sleep problems and low energy can occur in people with diabetes, thyroid disorders, some disorders of the nervous system, heart disease, cancer and stroke. These are also symptoms of depression.
- Lack of interest, poor concentration and memory loss can occur in people with Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease. These are also symptoms of depression.
- Some medications can have side effects similar to the symptoms of depression.

Importance of Treatment

- When treated for depression, people are better able to follow their medical plan. This can lead to improvement in their condition and a better quality of life.
- More than 80 percent of people with depression can be treated with medication, talk therapy or both.

Getting Help

More information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at www.MagellanHealth.com/member. Or call 800-888-3773 for information, help and support. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance.