

## From Cary, Illinois: Depression in Later Life

Depression is a prevalent health care problem in other places besides northern Illinois, as it affects more than 19 million Americans, nationwide, every year, regardless of age, race, or gender. While depression is not a normal part of the aging process, there is a strong likelihood of it occurring when other physical health conditions are present.

For example, nearly a quarter of the 600,000 people who experience a stroke in a given year will experience clinical depression.

Unfortunately, symptoms of depression are often overlooked and untreated when they coincide with other medical illnesses or life events that commonly occur as people age (e.g., loss of loved ones). However, clinical depression is never a normal response; it is a serious medical illness that should be treated at any age.

### Prevalence

More than two million of the 34 million Americans age 65 and older suffer from some form of depression.

### Co-occurring Illnesses

Health care is a complex interactive process because symptoms of clinical depression can be triggered by other chronic illnesses common in later life, such as Alzheimers disease, Parkinsons disease, heart disease, cancer and arthritis.

### Widowhood

One-third of widows/widowers meet criteria for depression in the first month after the death of their spouse, and half of these individuals remain clinically depressed after one year.

### Healthcare Costs

Older patients with symptoms of depression have roughly 50% higher healthcare costs than non-depressed seniors.

### Suicide

Depression is a significant predictor of suicide in elderly Americans.

Comprising only 13% of the U.S. population, individuals aged 65 and older account for 20% of all suicide deaths, with white males being particularly vulnerable.

Suicide among white males aged 85 and older (65.3 deaths per 100,000 persons) is nearly six times the suicide rate (10.8 per 100,000) in the U.S.

### Treatment

More than 55% of older persons treated for mental health services received care from primary care physicians. Less than 3% aged 65 and older received treatment from mental health professionals.

Health care problem: Primary care physicians accurately recognize less than one half of patients with depression, resulting in potentially decreased function and increased length of hospitalization.

Fortunately, clinical depression is a very treatable illness. More than 80% of all people with depression can be successfully treated with medication, psychotherapy or a combination of both.

### Health Care: Older Adult Attitudes toward Depression:

According to a National Mental Health Association survey on attitudes and beliefs about clinical depression:

Approximately 68% of adults aged 65 and over know little or almost nothing about depression.

Only 38% of adults aged 65 and over believe that depression is a health problem.

Important health care fact: If suffering from depression, older adults are more likely than any other group to handle it themselves. Only 42% would seek help from a health professional.

Signs of depression are mentioned more frequently by people under age 64 than people aged 65 and over. These include a change in eating habits (29% vs. 15%), a change in sleeping habits (33% vs. 16%) and sadness (28% vs. 15%).

About 58% of people aged 65 and older believe that it is normal for people to get depressed as they grow older.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

#### About the Author

Dr Shery is in Cary, IL, near Algonquin, Crystal Lake, Marengo, Woodstock and Lake-in-the-Hills. He's the only long term care psychologist who adds targeted training to get faster results. Call 1 847 516 0899 or learn more at: <http://www.nextdayappointment.com>