Aging Futures

Seniors and Depression

Depression among older adults is a major public health problem. It is estimated that at least two million seniors suffer from depression, and for a variety of reasons, the problem often goes unreported, undiagnosed, and untreated with a direct impact on quality of life, morbidity, mortality, and health care costs.

Why it is important

Depression is not a normal part of aging. However, symptoms of depression can be triggered by events common in later life. Depression can also be related to losses suffered through aging, certain medications, bereavement, and chronic illnesses such as Parkinson's disease, heart disease, cancer, dementia and arthritis. In addition, other risk factors include female gender, family history of depression, severe or chronic pain, and alcohol or drug misuse or abuse.

Depression is a significant predictor of suicide in elderly Americans. Elders comprise about 13% of the national population, but elders 65 and older account for 20% of all suicide deaths, with white men being particularly vulnerable. Suicide among white males aged 85 and older is nearly six times the suicide rate in the U.S.

Diagnosis and Treatment

In addition to the more common symptoms of depression such as feeling hopeless and helpless, seniors may experience memory problems, confusion, withdrawal from social situations, irritability, and/or sleep problems.

Many seniors do not seek treatment because they believe depression isn't serious or that it is a personal weakness rather than a serious illness. For those who seek treatment, more than 80% respond well, so early diagnosis and treatment are important.

Effective treatment options include medication, counseling, and support groups. Since Medicare and managed care health plans promote the diagnosis and treatment of depression by primary care providers, many seniors receive care in the primary care setting. Community mental health screenings for seniors and additional education for primary care providers can increase early detection and successful treatment.

Our Mandate

As seniors age and the likelihood of chronic illness and mental health problems increase, it is imperative that depression be assessed and treated in our community. Doing so will enhance quality of life, prevent higher morbidity and mortality, and lead to greater cost effectiveness in service delivery.

Over ➔

c/o Broome County Office for Aging / PO Box 1766 / Binghamton, NY 13902 (607) 778-2411 Fax (607) 778-2316

The Aging Futures Partnership is supported by funding from Community Partnerships for Older Adults, a national program of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

www.agingfutures.org

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Aging Futures Responds: The SMILE Program

The Senior Mood Improvement through Lifestyle and Education (SMILE) program, which has been adapted from other evidence-based initiatives, focuses on early detection of depression in seniors living in the community.

Following screening, seniors receive educational materials including information on mental health providers in the community and referral if necessary. Elders experiencing symptoms of depression will receive a six-week cognitive-behavioral counseling program by a trained professional. Elders will identify and participate in positive mood-enhancing activities to decrease feelings of sadness and isolation.

Local Mental Health Resources for Seniors

Suicide Hot Line*
United Health Services (UHS)
Crisis Center at Binghamton General Hospital
10-42 Mitchell Avenue, Binghamton, NY 13903-1678
(607) 762-2302 (800) 451-0560
Web: uhs.net

Broome County Veterans Agency
44 Hawley Street, Binghamton, NY 13901
(607) 778-2147
Web: gobroomecounty.com/veterans/

Broome Co. Community Mental Health Services
One Hawley Street, Binghamton, NY 13901-3106
(607) 778-1152 Fax: 778-6169

Catholic Social Services
232 Main Street, Binghamton, NY 13905-2699
(607) 729-9166 Fax: 729-2062

Samaritan Counseling Center of the Southern Tier
Endicott Location
202 E. Main Street, Endicott, NY 13760
(607) 754-2660 Fax: 754-0769

HOME Program
Broome County Office for Aging
County Office Building, 4th Floor
PO Box 1766, Binghamton, NY 13902-1766
(607) 778-2411 Fax: 778-2316
Web: gobroomecounty.com/community/Senior.php

Family & Children's Society
257 Main Street, Binghamton, NY 13905
(607) 729-6206 Fax: 729-1858
Email: info@familycs.org
Web: familycs.org

Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier
153 Court Street, Binghamton, NY 13901
(607) 771-8888 Fax: 771-8892
Email: ingrid.maniates@yourmha.com
Web: yourmha.com

Jewish Family Service
Jewish Community Center
500 Clubhouse Road, Vestal, NY 13850-3733
(607) 724-2332 Fax: 724-2311

United Health Services (UHS)
UHS Family Ties Program
(607) 762-2887
Web: uhs.net

***Crisis Service**

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