



E-WEEKLY

May 29, 2012

DEPRESSION IN THE ELDERLY LINKED TO HEALTH STATUS



Epidemiology

The prevalence of depression in the total US population is 1%. The estimated prevalence for those over the age of 65 is significantly higher: 4.4% in women, and 2.7% in men.

Overall health status is a major contributing factor.

- For those with medical problems, the prevalence of depression ranges from 7% to 36%
- For those who are hospitalized, the rate is 40%.
- For patients with Alzheimer and Parkinson disease the rate is 50%.

Diagnostic Criteria: Depressive illness in older patients is similar to that seen in the general population. Recognizing it may be confounded by observer bias that may assume that the elderly do not live as active and vibrant emotional lives as younger folk.

Signs and Symptoms of Depression:

1. depressed mood, irritability, negativity
2. loss of interest in daily activities
3. recent weight gain or weight loss
4. sleep disturbance: insomnia or hypersomnia
5. changed activity level: agitation vs. retardation
6. loss of energy, fatigue
7. feeling worthless, reduced self regard
8. difficulty concentrating
9. thoughts of death or suicide

Screening scales

The Geriatric Depression Scale is a useful self-rating tool that can be used in the PCP office setting.

It screens for seven characteristics of depression in the elderly: somatic concern, lowered affect, cognitive impairment, feelings of discrimination, impaired motivation, lack of future orientation and lack of self-esteem.

To see the GDS tool go to www.pc2education.org and go to the Resources tab.

Lab tests recommended for Depression work-up:

TSH, Chem Panel, CBC, Vit B12, Vit D level, urine toxicology

Differential Findings: Depression vs Dementia

Cognitive Impairment: In dementia, cognitive impairment is typically slow and progressive. In depression, cognitive and other functional decline tends to occur more rapidly in association with deterioration of mood state

Concentration: Depressed patients can experience significant difficulties in thinking and concentrating, however, they will typically be distressed about these deficits. Patients with dementia in contrast may not recognize their deficits or be less disturbed by them.

Language and Motor Skills: Depressed patients may exhibit slowed cognitive and motor performance but they do retain their functional capabilities whereas actual impairment in speech, writing and other formal skills develops in demented patients

Suicide in the Elderly:

Older Americans are disproportionately likely to die by suicide.

- Depression is the most common diagnosis in elderly persons who commit suicides.
- Although they comprise only 12 percent of the U.S. population, people age 65 and older accounted for 16 percent of suicide deaths in 2004.
- Approximately 63% of those who commit suicide are white elderly men and 85% of them have an associated psychiatric or physical illness.
- About 75% of those who commit suicide had visited a primary care provider within the preceding month, but their symptoms were not recognized or treated.

CALL:

(858) 880-6405

E-MAIL:

PC2@VISTAHILL.ORG



E-CONSULT:

ECONSULTSD.COM