



CLAYMAN & ASSOCIATES^{PC}

Complex Problems. Clear Solutions.

Elder Depression & Suicide

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- There are many wonderful PowerPoint presentations on the internet. I have 'borrowed' from a few of these to prepare this webinar.
 - HelpGuide.Org: DEPRESSION IN OLDER ADULTS
 - American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT). Suicide in the Elderly. Available at https://www.aamft.org/imis15/AAMFT/Content/Consumer_Updates/Suicide_in_the_Elderly.aspx.
 - American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). Suicide Statistics. Available at <http://afsp.org/about-suicide/suicide-statistics/>.



How I view all psychological issues

- Bio
- Psycho
- Social

COMPLEX



Overview

- **THESE TOPICS ARE A UNIVERSAL CONCERN.**
- **Psychological/Psychiatric issues continue to be grossly neglected...lots of talk...not much action.**
- **In older populations may be avoided – denied – because may be seen as another sign of weakness, deterioration, etc.**
- **Comorbid with physical problems.**
- **IT ISN'T JUST BECAUSE YOU ARE OLD!**



Psychological issues and LIFE

- Some things accentuated with age.
- Change always is hard.
- Loss always is hard.
- When you don't feel right...
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Other disorders.



DEPRESSION – Keeping the Secret

- **May assume there is a good reason to be 'down' or that depression is just part of aging.**
- **May be isolated – increasing depression – with no one around to notice (or try to act).**
- **May not realize physical complaints are signs of depression.**
- **May be reluctant to talk about feelings or ask for help.**
- **Can create a self-defeating cycle.**
- **May add to sense of loss of control.**



Signs of DEPRESSION

- Sadness or feelings of despair
- Unexplained or aggravated aches and pains
- Loss of interest in socializing or hobbies
- Weight loss or loss of appetite
- Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness
- Lack of motivation and energy
- Sleep disturbances (difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, oversleeping, or daytime sleepiness)
- Loss of self-worth (worries about being a burden, feelings of worthlessness or self-loathing)
- Slowed movement and speech
- Increased use of alcohol or other drugs
- Fixation on death; thoughts of suicide
- Memory problems, slowed movement and speech
- Neglecting personal care (skipping meals, forgetting meds, neglecting personal hygiene)



What's supposed to “cure” you...

- Blood pressure medication (clonidine)
- Beta-blockers (e.g. Lopressor, Inderal)
- Sleeping pills
- Tranquilizers (e.g. Valium, Xanax, Halcion)
- Calcium-channel blockers
- Medication for Parkinson's disease
- Ulcer medication (e.g. Zantac, Tagamet)
- Heart drugs containing reserpine
- Steroids (e.g. cortisone and prednisone)
- High-cholesterol drugs (e.g. Lipitor, Mevacor, Zocor)
- Painkillers and arthritis drugs
- Estrogens (e.g. Premarin, Prempro)
- Alcohol



May not feel SAD but instead...

- Low motivation,
- Lack of energy, or
- Physical problems.
 - [Parkinson's disease](#)
 - stroke
 - heart disease
 - cancer
 - diabetes
 - thyroid disorders
 - Vitamin B12 deficiency
 - lupus
 - multiple sclerosis
 - [dementia](#) and [Alzheimer's disease](#)



Depression or Dementia

Symptoms of Depression	Symptoms of Dementia
Mental decline is relatively rapid	Mental decline happens slowly
Knows the correct time, date, and where he or she is	Confused and disoriented; becomes lost in familiar locations
Difficulty concentrating	Difficulty with short-term memory
Language and motor skills are slow, but normal	Writing, speaking, and motor skills are impaired
Notices or worries about memory problems	Doesn't notice memory problems or seem to care



What can you do?

- Do not ignore...
- Seek/encourage social contact (human or animal).
- Healthy habits
 - Move
 - Eat
 - Sleep
- Professional help.
 - Psychological
 - Medical
- Remove dangerous items from home (e.g., firearms)



When Depression becomes Despair Suicide and the Older Adult

- Not a topic easily discussed (at any age).
- Older adults do not seek mental health services (unless pushed to it).
- Insurance providers discourage seeking these services.
- The major risk factor appears to be coexisting mental disorder with a myriad of other issues.



Statistics (2014)

Rates by State

(per 100,00 population)

- National = 13.4
- (1) Montana = 24.5
- (10) **WEST VIRGINIA = 19.4**
- (51) District of Columbia = 7.9

12% of US population –
18% suicide deaths

Rates by Age Group

- 5-14 = 1.0
- 15-24 = 11.6
- 25-34 = 15.1
- 35-44 = 16.6
- 45-54 = 20.2
- **55-64 = 18.8**
- **65-74 = 15.6**
- **75-84 = 17.5**
- 85+ = 19.3
- 65+ = 16.6



Suicide warning signs

- Loss of interest in things or activities that are usually found enjoyable
- Cutting back social interaction, self-care, and grooming
- Breaking medical regimens (such as going off diets, prescriptions)
- Experiencing or expecting a significant personal loss (spouse or other)
- Feeling hopeless and/or worthless
- Putting affairs in order, giving things away, or making changes in wills
- Stock-piling medication or obtaining other lethal means
- Other clues are a preoccupation with death or a lack of concern about personal safety. Remarks such as "This is the last time that you'll see me" or "I won't be needing anymore appointments" should raise concern.
- The most significant indicator is an expression of suicidal intent.



More “Existential” Issues

- In the face of hopelessness in the prospects for a satisfying future, some older adults choose to end their lives prematurely.
- Hidden by personality features (timidity, shyness, seclusiveness, a tendency toward hypochondriasis, hostility, and a rigid, fiercely independent lifestyle, etc.)
- Less attempts...high % fatalities.
- Family cultures and historical issues.
- Speaking their language.
- Seeing the light.
- Finding meaning.
- Need to normalize the thoughts...find options for the actions.
- Destroy the myths:
 - They will get angry with me.
 - I might out suicidal thoughts into their heads.
 - I won't know what to say.
- DO NOT IGNORE THE SIGNS.



QUESTIONS?

A few last words.

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