



MARYLAND COALITION ON MENTAL HEALTH & AGING

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LATE LIFE DEPRESSION: A Fact Sheet to Share

- ✓ Depression is not a normal part of aging but over 58% of older adults think it is.
- ✓ Modern brain imaging technologies reveal that during a depression, neural circuits responsible for the regulation of moods, thinking, sleep, appetite and behavior fail to function properly, and that critical neurotransmitters – chemicals used by nerve cells to communicate – are out of balance.
- ✓ Late-life depression affects an estimated six million older adults (most of them women), yet only 10% of these people get treatment.
- ✓ Older people with significant symptoms of depression have roughly 50% higher healthcare costs than non-depressed older adults.
- ✓ Untreated depression makes pain and other health problems worse.
- ✓ Clinical depression can be triggered by medications or chronic illnesses common in later life such as diabetes, stroke, heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and arthritis.
- ✓ Older adults are considered the group most at risk for suicide. The suicide rate in older adults is more than double that of any other population.
- ✓ While individuals over the age of 65 comprise only 13% of the U.S. population, they account for 20% of all suicide deaths.
- ✓ Many older adults who committed suicide had seen their primary care physician close to the time of their death: *20% percent on the same day, 40% within one week, and 70% within one month of the suicide.*
- ✓ More than 80% of people with depression improve when they receive appropriate treatment with medication, psychotherapy, or a combination of the two.

Further information on mental health can be found on the website www.mdaging.org or contact Kim Burton at 410-235-1178 x 210.