

Senior Health

Mental Health And The Prospect Of Healthy Aging

(NAPSA)—The good news about mental health problems is that they may be prevented or treated, especially if caught early, in people of all ages—including senior citizens. The following symptoms could be cause to call for consultation with a health care professional:

- Sadness that has lasted longer than two weeks;
- Consistent worries about issues such as money, family and health;
- Consistent trouble sleeping or concentrating;
- Frequent trouble remembering things or feeling confused in familiar places; and
- Having more than one alcoholic drink a day or taking more medication than prescribed.

The Role Of Treatment

“Treatment works the same whether you are 18 or 80,” said Laurie Young, Ph.D., executive director of the Older Women’s League (OWL). “And even better news is that we now know more about prevention. Research shows that eating right, getting exercise and enough sleep, exercising the mind and staying close to friends and family all go a long way to maintaining and enhancing mental health.”

Surprisingly, an estimated 60 percent of Americans believe that depression is a normal part of aging—and according to a recent survey, the attitudes of some health professionals may not be all that different.

The organization recently conducted a poll of three groups of health professionals who regularly come in contact with older adults—physician assistants, physical therapists and nurse’s aides. Results include:



- One-third of physician assistants and physical therapists, and two-thirds of nurse’s aides, mistakenly think that it is normal for people to get depressed as they get older.

- More than one in five health professionals polled mistakenly think that the effectiveness of mental health treatment decreases as patients age.

- The vast majority of respondents know that clinical depression is a health problem.

“One in five Americans of all ages—young and old—experiences a diagnosable mental health problem in any given year,” said Young. “However, adults over age 75 have the highest suicide rate of any age group. Clearly, increased understanding can save lives.”

Her organization is dedicated to making the lives of midlife and older women as productive and healthy as possible, and this includes promoting their mental health.

Learn More

For more information on mental health issues for seniors, visit www.owl-national.org.