Depression: A Universal Disorder

Abstract

The presented text gives information on behalf of the mental disorder of depression. The purpose of this essay is to give detailed information to those who wish to become more educated on this disorder. What is depression? explains the disorder, including diagnosis criteria. The abbreviation, DSM is mentioned within the text. DSM is The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. This book is used by medical professionals during mental disorder diagnosis. Effects of Depression gives examples of the implications on one's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional health due to depression. Prevention and treatment options are included within the text. These sections give information on lifestyle changes to prevent depression from occurring as well as treatment methods for those who are already diagnosed. Statistics and demographic information is also included in the end, so readers are informed of the many groups and the rates of groups who are more susceptible to depression.

Depression: A Universal Disorder

Depression is a well known disorder that significantly impacts the lives of individuals across the globe. This disorder affects not only your body, but it also affects your mind, your emotions, and your social life. The statistics have changed throughout time, as did the diagnoses that was once established by psychologists and the DSM. Research conducted on behalf of this topic has proven that depression has absolutely no boundaries. No matter your social economic status, your ethnicity, your education, or your age, depression can affect you at some point in your life. Despite the seriousness of this disorder, there are various prevention methods and treatments to help you live a normal, depression free life.

What is Depression?

Depression, a disorder that is widespread globally and affects every single person young and old, regardless of their background. Many people know depression as having feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness that persists for more than two weeks (Berger, 2017). Depression can be defined in various ways. The American Psychiatric Association (APA), defines depression as a serious medical illness that affects how you feel, think, and act in a negative way (Parekh, 2017).

Depression is a controversial disorder due to the fact that there are people who believe that it is just a symptom and not a mental impairment. Despite the claims and opinions made by people who disagree, depression has very serious implications on one's overall life and health. The DSM-5 lists depression as a serious mood disorder, along with symptoms and diagnostic criteria. According to the DSM-5, 5-9 symptoms must be prevalent in order to diagnose someone with this mood disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Symptoms of depression consist of, sadness, irritable moods, changes in appetite, activity, sleep patterns, and a decreased interest in things that were once enjoyed. Someone who is depressed may also notice a lack of energy and feel tired, even after getting an adequate amount of sleep.

Concentration is impaired, and the ability to make decisions may become difficult (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Another very common indication that someone is depressed is their personal opinion of their worth. Someone who has this disorder may feel worthless or hopeless and may have an excessive amount of guilt for no particular reason. There are people who inflict self harm or have experienced parasuicide, in other words, failed a suicide attempt. Self harm can be many things including cutting or burning of the skin. Like many may know, suicidal ideation is also another common symptom that is most typical around the age of 15 (Berger, 2017). Someone who is depressed may have thoughts, or have a laid out plan on how he/she will go through with the act of suicide. There are many things that can make depression obvious. These are more physical signs that are not specifically listed in the DSM-5 but are definitely a warning sign that someone may be moderately or severely depressed.

Effects of Depression

Depression affects every aspect of a person's life. It has many physical, cognitive, social, and emotional health effects that intervene with daily activities. Physical effects can cause a dramatic change in one’s quality of life. Someone who is depressed, suffers headaches, pain sensitivity, and has a higher risk of dying following a heart attack. Depression also weakens the immune system, making it difficult for the body to fight illnesses, and may also cause certain neurological diseases. The risk for cardiovascular disease is also higher in those who are depressed due to blood vessels compressing, reducing the flow of blood. It may also lead to overeating or the loss of appetite. Weight changes can cause not only obesity, but also obese-related illnesses as well as nutritional deficiencies for those who do not eat enough (Pietrangelo & Cherney, 2017). Cognitive decline is also a result of depression. Those who suffer from this disorder have abnormal structures and functionality of circuits in the brain (Gilbert, 2018). Cognitive decline occurs due to the lack of energy and motivation causing an individual to be mentally absent during certain daily activities (Gilbert, 2018). For instance in sports or work, performance may decline due to the lack of interest. People who are depressed may also have deficits in attention, verbal learning, problem solving, memory loss, and many other cognitive dysfunctions (Lam et al., 2014). Apart from negative physical and cognitive effects, depression also has negative effects on emotional stability and social life.

Social interactions are difficult to conduct when someone is depressed, but isolating oneself and staying away from family and friends can not only cause depression, but it may also result in it becoming more serious. Interactions, both good and bad, cause an emotional reaction to someone who is depressed, because they are more sensitive than the average person. Everyone has the need to connect with others, and to feel a sense of belonging. When important relationships become distant or negative this can cause the depressed person to have a more severe reaction as opposed to someone who isn’t depressed. Emotions are the forefront of depression. As stated in “How does depression affect your emotions?,” someone who is depressed feels sad, empty, hopeless, irritable, aggressive, anxious nervous, etc. most of the day, almost every day. Although these emotions may be persistent there are cases where someone who is depressed feels numb to all emotions.

Prevention

Preventing a disorder is not an easy task to accomplish. Most people don’t know if they are at risk of suffering from a mood disorder. Depression isn’t very common in early childhood, but it

does become more apparent with the onset of puberty. Changes in the body causes young teenagers to become self conscious, and the surge of hormones makes them more susceptible to depression. The mind and the body are connected, therefore there are many things that one can do to prevent depression from occurring. Regularly exercising can help a person prevent depression. Exercise releases mood boosting hormones like endorphins, thus joining a sports or a health club will help make exercise a habit, reducing the risk of depression. Another way to help prevent depression is by maintaining a strong support system and cutting ties with toxic people. This will allow one to connect with others who are positive contributions to ones life and fulfill the human need of connection. Learning how to cope with daily hassles that cause stress can also help with prevention, as well as getting proper sleep, and quitting bad habits like smoking and alcohol use.

Treatment

For some, it may be too late to intervene and stop the development of depression, thus treatment is seeked in order to slow down symptoms, or help cope with it. Similar to many other disorders, depression can be treated, and has a variety of treatment options. Psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy have been proven to be very successful treatments of this disorder (Levenson et al., 2012). Some examples of psychotherapy are cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), systematic-behavioral family therapy (SBFT), and nondirective supportive therapy (NST) (Kolko, 2000). CBT is a social therapy that helps change behavior and thinking habits. SBFT is a family based therapy that helps identify the problems in a dysfunctional home. Upon problem identification, communication and problem solving solutions are taught to the family. NST is a client directed style of therapy. The therapist aids the client by listening, and discussing problems mentioned by the client. Pharmacotherapy includes antidepressants such as, zoloft and prozac among many other medications. Studies have researched and shown a correlation between personality and the successfulness of certain treatment strategies. Those who suffer from personality pathology may take longer and need extra treatment in order to reduce the effects of depression, compared to someone with a personality disorder like OCD (Levenson et al., 2012). Although some treatments may not work for most people, there are many options out there that can help treat depression, ranging from psychotherapy, pharmacotherapy, to simple lifestyle changes.

Statistics & Demographics

Despite the growing rates of depression, some groups have maintained high ratings. Depression is most common in females because girls ruminate more than boys (Worley,2019). Statistics show that 40% of girls and 20% of boys have stopped activities that were once enjoyable for two weeks or more. 23% of girls and 12% of boys have also contemplated suicide (Berger, 2017). People who suffer from other medical conditions are also more likely to suffer from depression. For example, 25% of people with cancer, 50% of people with Parkinson's disease, and 27% of people with who abuse substances are more likely to also develop depression ('Depression Statistics: Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance,' n.d.). Millions of people suffer from major depressive disorder, but who is more at risk of developing it?

Some people are more susceptible to depression depending on their age, ethnicity, education, and their SES. Depression is more common in teenagers due to the onset of puberty. 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 10 boys will suffer from depressive mood disorder (Berger, 2017). Research has

been made on depression and ethnic differences but it samples have been predominantly white adolescents. Latino adolescents have a higher suicide risk than their white peers. African American adolescents are less likely to have successful treatment outcomes (Mellick et al., 2019). Women who are pregnant are also at high risk of depression, more commonly known as postpartum depression. There are certain socioeconomic statuses that are at higher risk of depression. For example, people who live in poverty stricken towns and cities, and people who don't earn enough money in their jobs are more likely to develop depression due to stress. People who are less educated are also more likely to become depressed. There are also professions like law enforcement, and social service employees that are at risk.

Like any illness, depression can affect anyone from young all the way to old age. It is a disorder that impairs someone to live a normal life, and has serious implication on one's health. There are many ways to prevent it from starting, or getting worse, as well as treatment for those who are already affected. Depression is a serious disorder that continues to grow among young and old people of all colors.

References

1. American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th Ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.
2. Berger, K. S. (2017). The Developing Person Through the Lifespan, 10th Edition. Adolescence: Psychosocial Development. New York.
3. Depression Statistics: Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://secure2.convio.net/dabsa/site/SPageServer/?pagename=education_statistics_depression
4. Gilbert, B. (2018). Addressing Cognitive Decline in Major Depressive Disorder. Retrieved from https://www.psychiatryadvisor.com/home/topics/mood-disorders/addressing-cognitive-decline-in-major-depressive-disorder/
5. How does depression affect your emotions? - Depression. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.medbroadcast.com/channel/depression/symptoms-of-depression/how-does-depression-affect-your-emotions
6. Lam, R. W., McIntrye, R. S., Kennedy, S. H., & Khullar, A. (2014). Cognitive Dysfunction in Major Depressive Disorder: Effects on Psychosocial Functioning and Implications for Treatment. Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4304584/
7. Levenson, J. C., Wallace, M. L., Fournier, J. C., Rucci, P., & Frank, E. (2012). The role of personality pathology in depression treatment outcome with psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0029396
8. Kolko, D. K., Brent, D. A., Baugher, M., Bridge, J., & Birmaher, B. (2000). Cognitive and family therapies for adolescent depression: Treatment specificity, mediation, and moderation. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.68.4.603
9. Mellick, W., Hatkevich, C., Venta, A., Hill, R. M., Kazimi, I., Elhai, J. D., & Sharp, C. (2019). Measurement invariance of depression symptom ratings across African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Caucasian adolescent psychiatric inpatients. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pas0000708
10. Parekh, R. (Ed.). (n.d.). What is Depression? Retrieved from https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/what-is-depression
11. Pietrangelo A. & Cherney K. (2017). The Effects of Depression in Your Body. Retrieved from https://www.healthline.com/health/depression/effects-on-body#1

12. Worley, M. M. (n.d.). Social and emotional development lecture.