

## **Depression Awareness Month**

Back in 2017 LECSAGRAM made reference to the prediction of experts that Depression was about to become the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest disability group in the US. At that time the rate of depression had increased 20% in the past ten years. This was before anyone knew anything about the coming global pandemic which would end up wreaking havoc on the mental health of people everywhere.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) clinical depression had been slowly rising in the U.S. prior to the COVID-19 pandemic but jumped notably in its wake. Social isolation, loneliness, fear of infection, psychological exhaustion (particularly among front-line responders such as healthcare workers), elevated substance abuse and disruptions in mental health services all played a role. While experiences of significant daily loneliness have subsided amid widespread vaccinations and a slow return to normalcy, elevated loneliness experiences during the pandemic played a substantive role in increasing the rates of the longer-term, chronic nature of depression.

Currently, 17% of U.S. adults report experiencing significant loneliness “yesterday,” projecting to an estimated 44 million people. Over one-third of women (36.7%) now report having been diagnosed with depression at some point in their lifetime, compared with 20.4% of men, and their rate has risen at nearly twice the rate of men since 2017. Those aged 18 to 29 (34.3%) and 30 to 44 (34.9%) have significantly greater depression diagnosis rates in their lifetime than those older than 44. This and other factors indicate that among those aged 60 and under depression is now the leading cause of disability in the world in front of hearing and vision loss as per the United Nations Health Agency.

The economic impact of depression worldwide may be > one trillion dollars (WHO).

According to Gallup polling the percentage of U.S. adults who report having been diagnosed with depression at some point in their lifetime has reached 29.0%, nearly 10 percentage points higher than in 2015. The percentage of Americans who currently have or are being treated for depression has also increased, to 17.8%, up about seven points over the same period. Both rates are the highest recorded by Gallup since it began measuring depression using the current form of data collection in 2015. .

In the United States still nearly half of those with depression are not being treated for a variety of reasons including shame and stigma, (being viewed as mentally ill) and a lack of access to services or awareness about the availability of help. Despite a preponderance of medical evidence supporting the biological origins of depression, 54% of those polled still believe depression is a personal weakness.

Major Depressive Disorders (MDD) can be diagnosed by medical professionals after at least two weeks of depressed mood and several of the following symptoms:

Persistent sadness, irritability, feelings of hopelessness, difficulty sleeping, fatigue, weight changes, problems with concentration, loss of interest in enjoyable activities, unwarranted feelings of worthlessness.

Depression can be successfully treated with medication and/or psychotherapy. Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) has shown promise and favorable results as an effective treatment for depression as well. It involves the use of magnets.

Be sure to see your healthcare professional should you experience the listed symptoms of depression and are feeling impacted at work, at home or in your social life.

For more information contact the National Alliance on Mental Illness at 516-224-4442

For help for you or a loved one call us:

**LECSA EAP/MAP @ 631-851-1295**

**October 2023**