

## **THE IMPACT AND COST OF MENTAL ILLNESS:**

### ***THE CASE OF DEPRESSION***

The personal and societal costs of depression are significant. They include higher rates of death, serious complications for chronic disease patients, significantly higher health care costs for employers, added family caregiver burden and associated substance abuse problems.

#### **Higher rates of death**

- Studies show that depression is associated with higher mortality rates in all age groups. Depression's impact is clear in the case of suicide.
- Suicide, a risk of untreated depression, is the 11<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the U.S., accounting for 30,000 deaths each year.
- Over 15 percent of depressed people take their own lives. The suicide rate is six times higher among men 85 and over than it is for the general population.

#### **Serious complications for chronic disease patients**

- People who have suffered a stroke or who have heart disease, diabetes, cancer, Parkinson's disease, and/or HIV/AIDS are at a much greater risk for depression than the overall population.
- Annual prevalence estimates of depression for these groups range from 10 percent to 65 percent. Depression often negatively affects the course of diseases.
- Depressed heart disease patients are much more likely to die after a heart attack than heart disease patients who are not depressed.
- Depression can interfere with the ability of patients to follow medication and dietary regimens and has recently been linked to increased bone loss in women.

#### **Workplace costs of over \$43 billion per year in direct and indirect costs**

- Major depression is associated with more annual sick days and higher rates of short-term disability than other chronic diseases.
- People suffering from depression have high rates of absenteeism (in some cases, three times more sick days than non-depressed workers) and are less productive at work.
- In a study comparing depression treatment costs to lost productivity costs, 45 to 98 percent of treatment costs were offset by increased productivity.

#### **Detrimental effects on all family members**

- The caregiver burden associated with depression can affect workplace performance.
- Children of mothers who suffer from chronic depression are more likely to have behavioral problems at school.

#### **Associated substance abuse problems**

- Rates of undetected depression among drug and alcohol users are estimated to be as high as 30 percent.
- In 2001, a federal government survey reported that adults who used illicit drugs were twice as likely to report suffering from serious mental illness, such as depression, as adults who did not use drugs.
- Due to the substantial co-morbidity of substance use and depressive disorders, restricting services is likely to "squeeze the balloon" onto another part of the system, such as jails and emergency departments.