

## Older Adults and Mental Health

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### Who is an older adult?

- Depends on perspective; Is it just a number?
- Aging process happens over a lifetime; physiological functioning does not correlate with chronological age
- Research on aging & mental health tends to focus on age 60/65+, but for persons with SMI: aging can start sooner
- 3 groups:
  - Young-old; age 65-74; well & functional
  - Middle-old; age 75-84; some lean towards frailty
  - Oldest-old; age 85+; more frail; fastest growing group

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### Quick Facts

- Census estimates that there are 40.3 million older adults living in the US
- By 2050, this number is projected to double to 88.5 million
- Increasing diversity: by 2030, 25% of aging population belong to minority racial/ethnic groups
- 95% live in community; 30% live alone;
- It is estimated that up to 20% of older adults experience one or more mental health or substance use issue
- Older women are more likely to have a mental health disorder while men are more likely to have a substance use disorder (SAMSHA)

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### Normal Aging

- Happens over lifespan; highly individual
- Physiological functioning does not correlate with chronological age
- Can have deficits & still age well
- Consider strengths & weaknesses, along with genetic factors, education, nutrition, & environment
- Economic well-being & health status closely linked

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### Overlay of Physical & Psychological

- Age-related changes in physical health, sensory acuity such as hearing and sight, nutrition & presence of mental health challenges are associated with decline in all psychological areas
- Decline in psychological areas leads to decreased ability to rehab, follow medical directions, eat well-balanced diet & increased disability

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### Prevalence of Mental Illness in Older Adults

- 1 in 4 has psychiatric disorder
- Most common: anxiety, depression & dementia
- Smaller proportion with schizophrenia; bipolar disorder
- Prevalence greater in medical settings (primary care; hospitals; EDs; nursing homes)

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### What is Mental Illness ?

- Mental illness is a disturbance in
  - Thought
  - Emotion
  - Behavior
- Mental illness influences thoughts, mood and choices and can result in serious functional impairment in one or more major life activities such as social or occupational
- 20% of people age 55 and older experience some type of mental health concern (National Association of Chronic Disease Directors)

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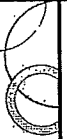
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### Common Psychiatric Disorders in Older Adults

- The 3 D's:
  - Depression
  - Dementia –complicated by challenging behaviors; mood disorders; anxiety disorders; & SMIs such as schizophrenia & other psychotic disorders
  - Delirium – often confused with dementia & psychotic disorders
- Anxiety

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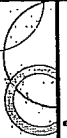
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### Why is it important to understand the 3 D's?

- Normal age-associated memory changes
- Determine appropriate treatment
- Depression is most common psych diagnosis in older adults & is very treatable
- Delirium is a medical emergency & life threatening; also very treatable
- Dementia - causes of some types are reversible; depression & delirium can mimic dementia

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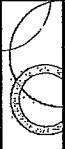
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### Depression

- Most common diagnosis (of the 3 D's) in older adults
- Not normal part of aging
- Both symptoms & disorder
- Major diagnostic issue: overlap with medical problems:
  - Reaction to medical illnesses & disability
  - Caused by some illnesses & medications
  - Masked by somatic complaints

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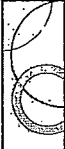
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### Depression

- Presentation:
  - feeling sad, empty and lonely
  - sleep disturbance
  - fatigue
  - decreased appetite
  - difficulty concentrating
  - memory impairment
  - loss of interest in pleasurable activities
  - irritability
  - anxiety

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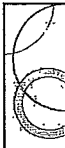
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### Risk Factors for Depression in Older Adults

- Changes in lifestyle, circumstances, or social support
  - Multiple losses
  - Stresses of caregiving
  - Loneliness and isolation
  - Reduced sense of purpose or loss of identity
  - Fears – Fear of death or dying; anxiety over financial problems or health issues
  - Alcohol and/or Substance abuse

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### Depression Treatment Options

Effective treatment reduces depressive symptoms and secondary symptoms such as pain and improves functioning and quality of life

- Psychotherapy/counseling including problem-solving therapy (PST), cognitive-behavioral (CBT)
- Support Groups
- Education in self-management of depressive symptoms: socialization; pleasurable activities
- Stress management skills
- Electroconvulsive Therapy – ECT
- Pharmacologic Intervention – Medications
- Nutrition, Supplements and Exercise
- Treatment from a mental health professional

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### Evidence-Based Psychotherapies

- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
- Interpersonal therapy (IPT)
  - Grief
  - Role transition
  - Interpersonal deficits
  - Interpersonal conflict
- Problem solving therapy (PST)
  - Insufficient problem solving skill
  - Abandonment of skill
  - Perceived complexity of problems

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### Delirium

- Medical emergency that develops rapidly over hours or days with changes in level of consciousness
- The onset is associated with:
  - the presence of an underlying medical condition such as a UTI or influenza
  - a brain event such as a stroke or an unrecognized head injury
  - an adverse reaction to a medication, or mix of medication
  - alcohol intake or withdrawal from abruptly stopping a medication, alcohol or nicotine
- Once diagnosed with Delirium, people at higher risk of dying within 6-12 months
- Increases the risk of dementia; can also be the first sign of dementia

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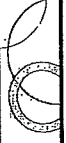
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### Presentation

- Fluctuating level of consciousness; disoriented, confused at night & early morning hours; remain lucid during day)
- Impaired ability to reason & carry out goal-directed behavior
- Alternating patterns of hyper/hypo-activity
- Impaired attention span
- Cognitive changes
- Alternations in sleep-wake patterns
- Fear & high-level of anxiety
- Possible hallucinations

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### Dementia

- Term to describe mental condition where memory & intellectual functioning is impaired
- Progressive deficits in memory & cognitive areas, such as language; perception; problem-solving; abstract thinking; judgment
- Not normal part of aging; destruction of brain cells by abnormal disease processes; ETOH abuse; head injury
- Alzheimer's most common type; others include Pick's disease; Lewey body; Crutchfeld-Jakob disease; Parkinson's
  - Alzheimer's Disease affects 5.5 million American adults and is expected to reach 13.8 million by the year 2050 (from Alz.org)

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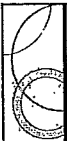
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### Dementia

- Since Dementia is a progressive disease, it gets worse over time. Symptoms vary for each person but there are 3 basic stages:
  - Early stage: the person is forgetful, confused or display odd behavior but still able to handle most tasks.
  - Middle stage: more help is needed with daily tasks, may have trouble recognizing friends and family, is more restless and may wander.
  - Late stage: presence of severe problems with memory, judgment and other skills and help is needed with nearly every aspect of life.

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