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Reports of Depression Jump Nearly 50 Percent in LA County New Public Health report shows a significant increase in the percentage of adults who said that they have been diagnosed as depressed

LOS ANGELES - The percentage of LA County residents reporting that they have ever been diagnosed with clinical depression rose sharply during the past decade, according to a report released by the Department of Public Health today. The report, Trends in Depression: Shedding Light on the Darkness, showed that nearly 14 percent of adults surveyed countywide reported that they have at some point been diagnosed with depressive disorder, compared to about 9 percent in 1999. This represents an almost 50 percent increase in the frequency of reported depression.

“The increase in rates of diagnosed depressive disorders may reflect better recognition and reporting of the disorder rather than an actual increase in the frequency of depression. However, from any perspective, depression takes a large toll in terms of disease burden, and is the most common mental health problem,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “We need to ensure that those suffering from depression get diagnosed early and receive timely care.”

Depression and depressive disorders create a significant burden to the health of LA County residents, affecting individuals’ ability to function and be productive in everyday life. It is a major cause of disability and economic loss in society, as well as a chief risk factor for suicide.

Other key findings from the report include:

- Women in LA County consistently reported higher rates of depression diagnoses than men. While rates of diagnosed depressive disorders increased for both men and women from 1999 to 2007, the increase was much greater for women (11 percent in 1999 to 17 percent in 2007) than for men (7 percent in 1999 to 10 percent in 2007).
- Although rates of depressive disorder increased across all racial/ethnic groups, Asians/Pacific Islanders consistently reported the lowest rates, a finding which may suggest under-recognition of depression in this group or other cultural variations.
- Depressive disorder often co-occurs with other chronic conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, and is sometimes associated with risky health behaviors, such as heavy drinking and cigarette smoking - factors that can lead to a decreased quality of life and premature death.

“Quality and culturally-appropriate mental health care is important for the effective treatment of the diverse LA County population,” said Rod Shaner, MD, Medical Director of the County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health.

The report released today highlights various ways that elected officials, businesses, health care providers, families and friends can help those suffering from depression, including:

- Making a culturally-sensitive mental health care and linguistically diverse services available to better serve the county’s ethnically diverse community
- Promoting a stigma-free work environment by providing education about depression to employees and promoting mental health wellness programs for employees
- Advocating for treatment and insurance reimbursement consistent with existing laws guaranteeing equal coverage of physical and mental health conditions
- Providing emotional support, understanding and patience, encouraging the individual to obtain immediate medical care
- If a loved one comments about suicide, do not leave the individual alone; actively help the person receive immediate care from a mental health or medical professional

If you are suffering from depression, do not allow shame or hopelessness stop you from obtaining the medical care you need. Visit <http://dmh.lacounty.gov/> for information about free and low-cost services available to you.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do, please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.

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