



Welcome to the third edition of the Accountable Aging, Inc. Newsletter. Our aim is to serve you with a trusted conduit of information from scientific and academic sources, and to highlight services we offer that meet the needs of senior adults and their families.

Many people hold the mistaken belief that depression is a normal part of aging. This edition is devoted to that topic, and begins with two questions. You'll find answers italicized within the article below.

True or False?

1. Depression is more than just feeling blue or sad; it is a serious illness that can interfere with daily life.
2. Depression is a disorder of the heart.



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DID YOU KNOW?

Accountable Aging provides direct services to seniors in San Antonio, Austin and Dallas as well as cities along the I-35 corridor (e.g. San Marcos, Georgetown, Belton and Duncanville). Mick and Mary are on the road weekly and have been known to call each other as Mick is driving to Dallas and Mary to San Antonio. Dedicated part-time staffers in San Antonio and Dallas serve senior clients in those areas: Debbie Randel in San Antonio and Shannon O'Connor in Dallas. Nurse consultants provide services in both cities as well. Mary Pat, our clinical nurse specialist who lives in Austin, also travels and consults in other cities.

The presence of Accountable Aging in all these cities was truly beneficial for one couple who received services in Georgetown, then San Antonio and lastly in Dallas. As they moved from city to city they had continuity of services.

Our multidisciplinary team provides their knowledge and skills to each client and their family no matter which city they live in. Although initially visited by a team of two and assigned to one care manager, every client benefits from the experience of the full team through frequent consultation, weekly conference calls, and shared responsibility for each client. Therefore, there's always a knowledgeable back-up for each client. Peace of mind is available to the senior client and their family through Accountable Aging's management of care.

It isn't just a little case of the "blues": Depression in the older adult

Depression is sometimes minimized and described as "a case of the blues". *In truth, depression is an actual illness with many causes, symptoms, consequences and treatments.* It affects a person's body, mood and thoughts. We know the US older adult population is growing, but it is less well known that depression is a common health problem within this group. Of the 35 million Americans age 65 or older, approximately two million suffer from full-blown depression and another 5 million suffer from less severe forms of the illness (NIH: Senior Health, 2007).

Some reasons for the lack of treatment of older adult depression are:

- People may assume that signs of depression are part of the normal aging process, which is NOT true.
- The senior may not want accept the diagnosis or treatment because of the stigma associated with having an emotional problem.

This illness can occur alone or along with other health problems such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, vision impairment, thyroid problems, hearing loss, memory impairment and Parkinson's disease, to name a few. Persons with depression may think they have memory loss (e.g. Alzheimer's disease) and persons with dementia can be depressed.

Doctors and other health providers use questions to help spot depression.

If you are worried that someone you love has depression, questions to ask are:

- Are you often bothered by feeling down in the dumps, very sad or hopeless?
- Do you have little interest or pleasure in activities you once enjoyed?
- Have you noticed changes in any of the following: energy level, concentration, memory, appetite, sleep, anxiety, irritability, fatigue?
- Are you feeling guilty or worthless?
- Are you crying more often or easily angered/irritated?
- Are you experiencing physical problems that don't seem to be resolved by treatment, such as stomachaches, headaches or chronic pain?
- Do you feel that your life is no longer worth living?

A "YES" to any of these questions means your loved one should discuss these concerns with his/her doctor and be direct: ask more about symptoms and depressive illness.

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The illness of depression is about biochemical imbalances in various parts of the brain. Depression is a biologic illness that needs treatment. This is NOT a character weakness or a failure to cope with one's life or a divine punishment for some past transgression.

Some symptoms of depression may include:

- Sleep problems: inability to sleep or sleeping too much
- Loss of interest in things usually enjoyed
- Considerable anxiety and worry
- Many physical complaints
- Feelings of guilt that are not warranted
- Decreased energy
- Difficulty with concentration or memory
- Unusual levels of irritation or anger
- Overuse, dependence or abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Appetite problems: having a poor appetite or overeating
- Thoughts of suicide
- Making plans for suicide *****If this occurs, call "911" and get help immediately.*****

Listen seriously to what your loved one is saying and get help for them today! There ARE ways to make it to the next day and to live happily in the future.

Find out more about depression and how to get help through these sources:

National Institute of Health: Senior Health Topics- Depression, <http://nihseniorhealth.gov/depression/toc.html>

American Society on Aging, <http://www.asaging.org>

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>; Public Information and Communications Branch:

1-301-443-4513 (local); 1-866-615-6464 (toll-free); 1-301-443-8431 (TTY); 1-866-415-8051 (TTY toll-free)

Families for Depression Awareness, <http://www.familyaware.org>

Your doctor: speak to him/her openly and honestly; use the word "depression". They are there to help!

ACCOUNTABLE AGING, INC.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: *We're excited to introduce Heidi Shanklin-Spock, LMSW, who recently joined our team. Heidi will work with clients and field professionals to determine and coordinate the resources that will best match our client's needs and ensure that the client can maintain the highest quality of life possible for as long as possible.*

Accountable Aging is a single source for seniors and their families to attain knowledge, resources and on-going assistance with the challenges related to aging or caring for an elder loved one. We serve seniors in Austin, Dallas, San Antonio and the surrounding areas.

For more information, contact us:

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