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## What is Mental Illness?

Mental illnesses are biologically-based brain diseases that can severely disturb a person's ability to think, feel, and relate to other people and the environment.

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## How are persons with mental illnesses stigmatized?

Persons with mental illnesses are feared or stereotyped as irrational, aggressive, and violent, whereas in fact, they are more likely to be isolated, passive, and withdrawn. Often they are blamed for falling victim to an illness that is clearly biologically based. Persons with mental illnesses are denied the opportunity to rebuild their lives in the community because of discrimination in housing, employment, and insurance coverage.

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## Is there hope?

Yes. Through research, scientists have made great advances in understanding the nature of mental illness in the last ten years.

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## Facts from *Mental Health, United States, 2002*

- 8.8% of US adults, or 17.1 million US adults, suffer from major depression, general anxiety disorders, and/or panic attacks. Between 38.7 – 44.8% of adults claim their disorders greatly affected their daily activity.
- 10.4 million adults contact a mental health professional yearly. 63% of adults seek contact with health professional. 28.5% of adults seek mental health professional. 8.5% do not seek help.
- 11.2% of those who recognize a mental health care need could not get help because of cost.
- 61.7% of people with mental illnesses also suffer from long-term health conditions. Of these people, ¾ of the people who meet criteria for mental illness did not seek help.
- 1 out of 11 US adults have suffered from major depression, general anxiety disorders, panic attacks, with in the last 12 months.
- There were 4,546 mental health organizations in 2000. The number of organizations providing 24-hour hospital and residential treatment services is 3,202 services in 2000. The number of organizations that provide less than 24-hour services is 3,542 in 2000.
- In 2000, there were 215,221 psychiatric beds provided by 24- hour service organizations.

- In the United States, total expenditures by mental health organizations in 2000 was \$4 billion. Source: Henderson, Marilyn J. M.P.A., and Ronald W. Manderscheid, Ph.D., eds., *Mental Health, United States, 2002*. US Dept. of HHS, Rockville, MD.

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## The Numbers Count: Mental Disorders in America (2001)

### Mental Disorders in America

Mental disorders are common in the United States and internationally. An estimated 22.1 percent of Americans ages 18 and older—about 1 in 5 adults—suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year.<sup>1</sup> When applied to the 1998 U.S. Census residential population estimate, this figure translates to 44.3 million people.<sup>2</sup> In addition, 4 of the 10 leading causes of disability in the U.S. and other developed countries are mental disorders—major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.<sup>3</sup> Many people suffer from more than one mental disorder at a given time.

In the U.S., mental disorders are diagnosed based on the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition (DSM-IV)*.<sup>4</sup>

### Depressive Disorders

Depressive disorders encompass major depressive disorder, dysthymic disorder, and bipolar disorder. Bipolar disorder is included because people with this illness have depressive episodes as well as manic episodes.

- Approximately 18.8 million American adults,<sup>5</sup> or about 9.5 percent of the U.S. population age 18 and older in a given year,<sup>1</sup> have a depressive disorder.
- Nearly twice as many women (12.0 percent) as men (6.6 percent) are affected by a depressive disorder each year. These figures translate to 12.4 million women and 6.4 million men in the U.S.<sup>5</sup>
- Depressive disorders may be appearing earlier in life in people born in recent decades compared to the past.<sup>6</sup>
- Depressive disorders often co-occur with anxiety disorders and substance abuse.<sup>7</sup>

### Major Depressive Disorder

- Major depressive disorder is the leading cause of disability in the U.S. and established market economies worldwide.<sup>3</sup>
- Major depressive disorder affects approximately 9.9 million American adults,<sup>5</sup> or about 5.0 percent of the U.S. population age 18 and older in a given year.<sup>1</sup>

- Nearly twice as many women (6.5 percent) as men (3.3 percent) suffer from major depressive disorder each year. These figures translate to 6.7 million women and 3.2 million men.<sup>5</sup>
- While major depressive disorder can develop at any age, the average age at onset is the mid-twenties.<sup>4</sup>

### Dysthymic Disorder

- Symptoms of dysthymic disorder (chronic, mild depression) must persist for at least 2 years in adults (1 year in children) to meet criteria for the diagnosis. Dysthymic disorder affects approximately 5.4 percent of the U.S. population age 18 and older during their *lifetime*.<sup>1</sup> This figure translates to about 10.9 million American adults.<sup>5</sup>
- About 40 percent of adults with dysthymic disorder also meet criteria for major depressive disorder or bipolar disorder in a given year.<sup>1</sup>
- Dysthymic disorder often begins in childhood, adolescence, or early adulthood.<sup>4</sup>

### Bipolar Disorder

- Bipolar disorder affects approximately 2.3 million American adults,<sup>5</sup> or about 1.2 percent of the U.S. population age 18 and older in a given year.<sup>1</sup>
- Men and women are equally likely to develop bipolar disorder.<sup>5</sup>
- The average age at onset for a first manic episode is the early twenties.<sup>4</sup>

### Suicide

- In 2000, 29,350 people died by suicide in the U.S.<sup>8</sup>
- More than 90 percent of people who kill themselves have a diagnosable mental disorder, commonly a depressive disorder or a substance abuse disorder.<sup>9</sup>
- The highest suicide rates in the U.S. are found in white men over age 85.<sup>8</sup>
- In 2000, suicide was the third leading cause of death among 15 to 24 year olds.<sup>8</sup>
- Four times as many men as women die by suicide;8 however, women attempt suicide two to three times as often as men.<sup>10</sup>

### Schizophrenia

- Approximately 2.2 million American adults,<sup>2</sup> or about 1.1 percent of the population age 18 and older in a given year,<sup>1</sup> have schizophrenia.
- Schizophrenia affects men and women with equal frequency.<sup>11</sup>
- Schizophrenia often first appears earlier in men, usually in their late teens or early twenties, than in women,

who are generally affected in their twenties or early thirties.<sup>11</sup>

### Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety disorders include panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, and phobias (social phobia, agoraphobia, and specific phobia).

- Approximately 19.1 million American adults ages 18 to 54, or about 13.3 percent of people in this age group in a given year, have an anxiety disorder.<sup>12</sup>
- Anxiety disorders frequently co-occur with depressive disorders, eating disorders, or substance abuse.<sup>7,13</sup>
- Many people have more than one anxiety disorder.<sup>11</sup>
- Women are more likely than men to have an anxiety disorder. Approximately twice as many women as men suffer from panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, agoraphobia, and specific phobia, though about equal numbers of women and men have obsessive-compulsive disorder and social phobia.<sup>11,14,15</sup>

### Panic Disorders

- Approximately 2.4 million American adults ages 18 to 54, or about 1.7 percent of people in this age group in a given year, have panic disorder.<sup>12</sup>
- Panic disorder typically develops in late adolescence or early adulthood.<sup>11</sup>
- About one in three people with panic disorder develop *agoraphobia*, a condition in which they become afraid of being in any place or situation where escape might be difficult or help unavailable in the event of a panic attack.<sup>11</sup>

### Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

- Approximately 3.3 million American adults ages 18 to 54, or about 2.3 percent of people in this age group in a given year, have OCD.<sup>12</sup>
- The first symptoms of OCD often begin during childhood or adolescence.<sup>11</sup>

### Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- Approximately 5.2 million American adults ages 18 to 54, or about 3.6 percent of people in this age group in a given year, have PTSD.<sup>12</sup>
- PTSD can develop at any age, including childhood.<sup>16</sup>
- About 30 percent of Vietnam veterans experienced PTSD at some point after the war.<sup>17</sup> The disorder also frequently occurs after violent personal assaults such as rape, mugging, or domestic violence; terrorism; natural or human-caused disasters; and accidents.

## Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

- Approximately 4.0 million American adults ages 18 to 54, or about 2.8 percent of people in this age group in a given year, have GAD.<sup>12</sup>
- GAD can begin across the life cycle, though the risk is highest between childhood and middle age.<sup>11</sup>

## Social Phobia

- Approximately 5.3 million American adults ages 18 to 54, or about 3.7 percent of people in this age group in a given year, have social phobia.<sup>12</sup>
- Social phobia typically begins in childhood or adolescence.<sup>11</sup>

### Agoraphobia and Specific Phobia

- *Agoraphobia* involves intense fear and avoidance of any place or situation where escape might be difficult or help unavailable in the event of developing sudden panic-like symptoms. Approximately 3.2 million American adults ages 18 to 54, or about 2.2 percent of people in this age group in a given year, have agoraphobia.<sup>12</sup>
- *Specific phobia* involves marked and persistent fear and avoidance of a specific object or situation. Approximately 6.3 million American adults ages 18 to 54, or about 4.4 percent of people in this age group in a given year, have some type of specific phobia.<sup>12</sup>

## Eating Disorders

The three main types of eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder.

- Females are much more likely than males to develop an eating disorder. Only an estimated 5 to 15 percent of people with anorexia or bulimia<sup>18</sup> and an estimated 35 percent of those with binge-eating disorder<sup>19</sup> are male.
- In their lifetime, an estimated 0.5 percent to 3.7 percent of females suffer from anorexia and an estimated 1.1 percent to 4.2 percent suffer from bulimia.<sup>20</sup>
- Community surveys have estimated that between 2 percent and 5 percent of Americans experience binge-eating disorder in a 6-month period.<sup>19,21</sup>
- The mortality rate among people with anorexia has been estimated at 0.56 percent per year, or approximately 5.6 percent per decade, which is about 12 times higher than the annual death rate due to all causes of death among females ages 15-24 in the general population.<sup>22</sup>

## Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

- ADHD, one of the most common mental disorders in children and adolescents, affects an estimated 4.1 percent of youths ages 9 to 17 in a 6-month period.<sup>23</sup>
- About two to three times more boys than girls are affected.<sup>24</sup>
- ADHD usually becomes evident in preschool or early elementary years. The disorder frequently persists into adolescence and occasionally into adulthood.<sup>25</sup>

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## FACTS ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

*Mental Illness is  
Everybody's Business*



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