

Depression in Children & Adolescents

Gloria Cantor

Community-University Health Care Center

October 2009

How Big is the Problem?

- Recent epidemiological studies:
 - rates up to 2.5% in children
 - rates up to 8.3% in adolescents
- Other studies: up to 40% in adolescents
- Rates increased since WWII, and earlier than in previous decades
- Weissman, Wolk & Goldstein Longitudinal Study
 - Early depression often persists or recurs in adulthood
 - Teen depression may predict greater severity in adulthood
- Rates higher for girls than boys by age 15, but 4 times more males than females age 15-19 died by suicide

How Big is the Problem?

- Depression in children & adolescents associated with high risk of suicidal behavior
- 2006: Suicide was 3rd leading cause of death for youths 15-24 yo
- Death rates by age group:

Ages 10-14	1.3 per 100,000
Ages 15-19	8.2 per 100,000
Ages 20-24	12.5 per 100,000

How Big is the Problem?

Special Risk Groups

- Black American teens, especially girls, may be at high risk of suicide even if they have never been diagnosed with depression
- High rates of suicide are seen in American Indian and Alaskan Natives
- Risk factors for suicide in youth:
 - Depression
 - Alcohol & drug use
 - Physical or sexual abuse
 - Disruptive behavior disorders

Risk Factors for Depression

- Family history of depression
- Stressful life events
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Chronic illness
- Poor social skills
- Low self-esteem / highly self-critical
- Break-up of romantic relationship
- Attentional, conduct or learning disorders

Symptoms of Depression

- Common to children, teens and adults
 - Persistent sad or irritable mood
 - Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
 - Significant change in appetite or body weight (up or down)
 - Insomnia or hypersomnia
 - Psychomotor retardation or agitation
 - Loss of energy
 - Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt
 - Trouble concentrating
 - Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide
- Five or more symptoms x 2 or more weeks / Major Depression

Symptoms of Depression

Elementary Age Children

- Somatic complaints
- School refusal
- Irritability & temper tantrums
- Social withdrawal
- Oppositionality
- Fighting

Symptoms of Depression Adolescents

- Substance abuse
- Increased risk taking
- Increased sexual activity
- Decreased school performance & truancy
- Social withdrawal
- Somatic complaints
- Eating disorders
- Antisocial behaviors
- Increased sensitivity to rejection or failure
- Trouble with relationships
- Fear of death

Organic Disorders

- Remember to screen for organic disorders, especially if psychotic symptoms are present!
 - Medical illness
 - Fever
 - Electrolyte imbalance
 - CNS infection/tumor/
Trauma/vascular accident
 - Seizures
 - Endocrine or autoimmune disorder
 - Hypoxia
 - Metabolic disorder
 - Adverse reaction to prescribed or OTC medication
 - Toxic ingestion
 - Reaction to illicit substance
 - Acute intoxication or toxic reaction
 - Flashback
 - Psychotic reaction to chronic drug use

Screening Instruments

- Child Depression Inventory / CDI
- Beck Depression Inventory / BDI
- Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale / CES-D
- PHQ-9

Frequent Co-Morbid Disorders

- Anxiety disorder – 30-70%
- Conduct disorders – 10-35%
- Eating disorders
- Substance abuse disorders
- Personality disorders

Treatment

- Therapy
 - Cognitive behavioral therapy
 - Interpersonal therapy
 - Family therapy
- Medication
 - SSRIs / Black-Box Warning
- TADS Study: Combination of medication & therapy most effective treatment for adolescents with depression