

Economic and Social Effect of Depression

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You are always busy, stressed, tired. You think it is totally normal to feel low, sad, anxious, and apathetic. “It is part of life,” you tell yourself waking up every morning. You wake up, again tired, busy, rushing to leave the house to go to school/work. You have headache, again, but you decide “just to take something for it”. You go to work everyday, but none of that interests you. You think about quitting your job, because it is really boring and makes you feel miserable. You are not going out anymore, you go to work and return home, spend your evenings in front of TV. You are tired and apathetic again. And you feel it is normal, just temporary feeling low. In reality, it is “normal” just for a short period of time and only if it is not interfering too much with your life. We tend to think that we need to take care of our bodies: eat cleaner, sleep more, get rest; but we usually forget to mention the importance of taking care of our mind, or mental health. The human body works at a fascinating pace, and mental processes are still quite unknown topics for us. Being healthy mentally is very important for a happy and healthy life-style. Depression is one of the diseases that disrupts healthy living. And because we underestimate its effects, we have a higher risk of developing interrupted conscious and unconscious mental processes. Often times, depression is viewed as a demonstration of egoism, laziness, or natural pessimism. For the most part, those are ignorant assumptions that prevent people from taking their symptoms seriously.

Everyone occasionally feels sad and anxious. It usually happens due to challenging circumstances and life stress. However, depression consists of feelings of sadness, anxiousness, apathy, lack of concentration and sleep, excessive crying, and other. In order to be diagnosed with depression, such symptoms have to continue for a long period of time and interfere with someone's ability to work, study, sleep, and perform everyday tasks. According to National Institute of Mental Health, approximately 14.8 millions American adults are affected by the depression and it is a third common cause of hospitalization in the US (National Institute of Mental Health, 2013). Knowing such statistic, the question that naturally arises is how does clinical depression affect social and economic levels of an individual's life? Depression increases financial burden, as well as make it more difficult for depressed person to communicate with his/her family, friends, and co-workers. My research will focus on the social and economical effects of the clinical depression.

In order to find out the economic and social effects of the depression, I have used library resources to find academic articles and books related to the topic of depression and its effects on the life of the patients. To answer the larger research question, I subdivided the topic into several smaller questions, some of those questions are: how does a person become diagnosed with the clinical depression? How does the diagnosis change the personal life of the patient? How does the depression effect one's surroundings: family, friends, co-workers? Does the depression influence working ability? What are the ratio of depressed people working to "normal" people? How much a

depressed person gets payed when compared to a normal person? The answer to this question will give an opportunity to arise the awareness about depression, and help the readers to realize all the seriousness of the disease, and how important is to provide people who suffers with depression with proper treatment and support. I would expect that depression lowers the person's ability to work, as well as have a hard time on his/her family and friends.

To get better understand the general topic of depression, first, we need to understand how person is diagnosed with depression. The first step in the diagnosis of depression is to visit a doctor. It might be the regular physician or psychologist. However, most likely both of those specialists would need to make their own conclusions in regard of the health. Doctors will run blood tests and several other physical tests, as well psychological test, using criteria listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) or in the newly established ICD-10, the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD). Both of those manuals list all the symptoms related to the depression, based on that, psychologist will examine your health. After reviewing all available information, the doctor will make the diagnosis. However, the system is not perfect. Depression can be hard to diagnose as it can be the part of other mental illnesses such as: maniac depressive illness, panic disorder, and generalized anxiety disorder.

Unfortunately, most of the times, depression is left untreated and undiagnosed. Patients are not always able to identify and bring awareness about the symptoms related

to the depression to the attention of their physicians. The study done by the set of researches, called “I Didn’t Know What Was Wrong: How People With Undiagnosed Depression Recognize, Name and Explain Their Distress”, examined all the reasons why people fail to be diagnosed with depression. Three main themes responsible for the such failing were “knowing, naming, and explaining” (Epstein, 957). Most commonly, participants did not have enough information in regard to the depression. They either did not notice any changes or contributed those changes to the special circumstances of life. The other reason was when they knew something was wrong, none of the family members or friends could confirm their concerns. Such reaction made them think they were exaggerating and were unreasonable with their judgements. Another component was that patients failed to connect symptoms with such diseases as depression. Depression is seen as a serious mental health illness, and naturally, people fear to be diagnosed with the disorder. In their eyes, it close to the fear of being diagnosed with cancer. The third component was explanation, participants of the study prefers to give depression related symptoms situational explanations and excuses. They thought it was temporarily or caused by their job, family conflicts.

Those three general components prevent people from being diagnosed with depression. Depression, left undiagnosed and untreated, takes over all aspects of person’s life. Depression has tendency to affect sleep cycle; disturbed sleeping schedule and lack of sleep has influence on the brain, performance, and physical activities. Accounting such negative consequences and adding other mostly mood related symptoms, depression is

characterized by the decreased ability to concentrate, loss of interest in any activities, development of a negative mood swings, as well as feelings of despair, apathy, and accompanying with low self-esteem. With such symptoms, person experience totally different perspective of life. Now, patient has to deal with all the symptoms accompanying with depression along with regular life adversities. Depression does not just affect mental process, it also disrupts physical abilities needed to function properly. Depression accounts for several physical symptoms such as: headaches, muscle aches and joint pain, digestive problems, chest pain, exhaustion and fatigue, change in appetite, gained or lost weight. All of those physical symptoms interfere with one's ability to work, study, and perform different everyday tasks.

Depression brings up many complications on patient's family, friends, co-workers. Most of the people are not able to fully understand what is going on in person's mind. People do not know how to react, what to say or what to do with someone who suffers with depression. They feel mostly uncomfortable and embarrassed for their lack of awareness or inability to help their loved ones. Others, will prefer to deny the existence of such illness, thinking it is problem created from nothing, making it extremely hard for the person suffering with depression. Commonly, person who suffers from depression has low self-esteem and is in a higher need of attention and support from the family and friends. It is a long and a hard process for both sides between the illness. Most of the times, depression makes relationships and communications harder. Because of constant feeling of sadness and loss of interest, patient is not able to be the same as family/friends

expect them to be. Such drastic change, following patients for month and month, makes their family and friends wonder if he/she is the same person they once knew. It takes time and a lot of patience to admit and actually help the loved one. Doctor Jamison in her memoir *An Unquiet Mind*, describes her process of overcoming depressions, the part of her suffer with bipolar disorder, as her “ruining personal relationships” experience (Jamison,1995). During her depressed episodes, she has lost interest in her job; it was hard to concentrate, she always felt too tired to do anything, all her previous excitement about her job. Dr. Jamison is the psychiatrist herself, but she was too embarrassed and afraid to admit that she had any mental problems. Such fear greatly affected her love life, and she soon got divorced. She said, it was mainly her fault as she stopped caring about her husband’s feelings, thoughts, interests, she got very distant from him, and he was unable to help her in any way. Depression gets in the middle of the relationships. It does not let you to enjoy the time with your family and prevents you from feeling secure and happy. Depression excludes you, and now, the isolation and feelings of loneliness get to play with your mind.

Depression does not only have an impact on the social side of the patient’s life. The study done by the set of US researches, examines the economic impact of the depression. They focus on the healthcare utilization and workers productivity. In the study “Reducing the Societal Burden of Depression: A Review of Economic Costs” authors state that depression causes absenteeism, presenteeism, and anhedonia, along with decreased workers productivity, and healthcare problems (Donohue, 2007).

According to Oxford Dictionary, absenteeism is “the practice of regularly staying away from work or school without good reason”. Depressed people begin to use the practice of absenteeism; patients feel discouraged, tired, and apathetic and decide to stay home without any partial reason. Along with anhedonia, inability to feel pleasure, person never feels satisfied with his/her job, and becomes discouraged to work. Presenteeism is “the act of attending work while sick”, this results in not proper job performance and fall of workers productivity. All of these reasons create problems for depressed people at their jobs and studies. According to *Forbes*: “The 13 million depressed full-timers missed 8.7 days of work per year, 4.3 more days than people who are not depressed”(Adams, 2013). In fact, depression causes almost 50% higher absences rate at the workplace.

Absenteeism and presenteeism influence spending on healthcare. According to the study: “total economic costs of depression totalled \$US 83.1 billion in 2000, up from \$US 77.4 billion in 1990. Between 1990 and 2000, direct treatment costs increased from \$US19.9 billion (25.7% of total costs) to \$US26.1 billion (31.4%), reflecting the increase in the number of people treated for depression over that time period” (Donohue, 2007). Besides the more personal effects, depression imposes costs on the work place. Generally, worker with depression is not able to contribute to the job as much as any other worker. And if the worker keeps taking days off, now the job is not getting done at all, and the worker risks to lose the job. Accounting on that, person’s economic and financial status becomes worse and now, there is another reason to feel sad and probably even more depressed. The healthcare system heavily depends on person’s financial status.

Unemployed and depressed, you are not able to afford health insurance or “good” insurance that will cover the cost of going to the therapy. According to *The Guardian*: therapy “can cost thousands and thousands of dollars” (Kasperkevic, 2015). With such high cost (every session varies from \$150 to \$900 per hour) many people without proper insurance are not able to afford even one session of consultation. Financial status, makes many people keep suffering with the disorder that only make the situation worse.

Throughout the history, rates of the depression has been constantly increasing. Depression is not still taken as a serious disease. In the article “Understanding the Impact of Depression,” Louch proposes the idea of “depression should be considered as a life-threatening disorder” (Loch, 2009). Depression does not only evoke negative consequences on the mental health of the patient, it also causes physical effects in one’s body. Depression can cause headaches, increased blood pressure, stomachache, decreased immune system that makes patient less resistible to the infectious diseases. Besides that depression is sometimes accompanying disease to another chronicle disease, and that causes an increase of ricks of causing a life-threatening effects. Depression decreases patient’s motivation to recovery. However, without proper motivation and positive attitude chances on recovery or agreement to receive treatment are at risk. People who suffers with untreatable diseases or the most life threatening, such as cancer, Autoimmune diseases, and life threatening genetic diseases, are the ones at higher risks of depression. They do not expect to recover, they lose normal physical abilities, develop several more

than unpleasant symptoms, suffers with severe pain, lose hope to recover. In such cases, they see the death as the best solution that will save them from pain and heartbreak.

Furthermore, depression increases risk of possible suicide. “Depression is the cause of over two-thirds of the 30,000 reported suicides in the US each year” (White House Conference on Mental Health, 1999). Because depression makes person so desperate, patients are not able to see the solution for their problems, and consider suicide as the best and the simplest answer. Dr. Jamison uses a new term “suicide depression” in her article To Know Depression in the New York Times. She points out that suicide depression is much worse than anything else. She says: “suicidal depression is a state of cold, agitated horror and relentless despair. The things that you most love in life leach away. Everything is an effort, all day and throughout the night. There is no hope, no point, no nothing” (Jamison, 2014). Kay Jamison also recommends that depressed patients and their family members talk about risks of a suicide. It is very important to make sure that patients understand all the risks and seek for a proper treatment.

Throughout this research I tried to prove my hypothesis that depression causes social and economic changes in the patient’s life. My findings proved my hypothesis. Depression touches every part of the life. It accounts for enough effects to completely change the person and his/her lifestyle. Most of the time, depression is left untreated, and it increases all the effects to the maximum. With more research done about depression, we begin to realize that something needs to be done in order to prevent all the negative consequences on the patient’s life. I did not find an answer for one of my questions; I

could not find any statistical evidence of how much depressed person makes compared to a “normal” person. Overall, I was not surprised by my findings. I was a little bit surprised by all the economic costs of the depression. Besides the cost of the therapy, it can potentially cost you a job. Depression imposes high costs on personal and economic life of the patient.

My research shows much evidence that depression should be taken more seriously. People need to realize how important it is to treat this disease as soon as possible, as well as educate others about proper communications with the depressed patient. Also, I think that it is important that workplace cared about its workers’ mental health. It is essential that depression is diagnosed early and treated properly, so all the negative effects can be prevented before they cause harm to the patient. I think it is crucial to bring awareness to any mental health disease. And accounting that depression is the leading cause for suicide, with proper awareness and education, we can lower suicide rates. I would also like to research more the treatment and prevention options to eliminate depression’s effects.

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