

Prevalence of Depression among Older Adults—Results from the Well-being of the Singapore Elderly Study

Mythily Subramaniam, ¹MBBS, MHSM, Edimansyah Abidin, ¹PhD, Rajeswari Sambasivam, ¹BSc, Janhavi A Vaingankar, ¹MSc, Louisa Picco, ¹MPH, Shirlene Pang, ¹MSc, Esmond Seow, ¹BA, Boon Yiang Chua, ¹MSc, Harish Magadi, ²MBBS, MRCPsych, Rathi Mahendran, ³MMed(Psych), MMed, FAMS, Siow Ann Chong, ¹MBBS, MMed(Psych), MD

Abstract

Introduction: Depression is a significant public health issue across all sociodemographic groups and is identified as a common and serious mental health problem particularly among the older adult population. The aims of the current study were to determine the prevalence of depression and subsyndromal depression among older adults in Singapore. **Materials and Methods:** The Well-being of the Singapore Elderly (WiSE) study was a comprehensive single phase, cross-sectional survey. Stage 1 Geriatric Mental State-Automated Geriatric Examination for Computer Assisted Taxonomy (GMS-AGECAT) depression syndrome was used for this analysis. Association of depression and subsyndromal depression with sociodemographic characteristics, social support as well as comorbidity with chronic physical illnesses and quality of life was assessed. **Results:** The prevalence of GMS-AGECAT depression and subsyndromal depression was 3.7% and 13.4%, respectively. The odds of depression were significantly higher among those aged 75 to 84 (2.1) as compared to those aged 60 to 74 years and in those who had a history of depression diagnosis by a doctor (4.1). The odds of depression were higher among those of Indian and Malay ethnicities (5.2 and 3.2 times, respectively) as compared to those of Chinese ethnicity. Those with depression and subsyndromal depression were associated with more disability, poorer life satisfaction, and medical comorbidities. **Conclusion:** Our study suggests that the prevalence of depression seems to have decreased as compared to a decade ago wherein the prevalence of depression was estimated to be 5.5%. This positive trend can be ascribed to concerted efforts across various disciplines and sectors, which need to be continually strengthened, monitored and evaluated.

Ann Acad Med Singapore 2016;45:123-33

Key words: Comorbidity, GMS-AGECAT, Social support, Subsyndromal depression

¹Research Division, Institute of Mental Health, Singapore

²Department of Geriatric Psychiatry, Institute of Mental Health, Singapore

³Department of Psychological Medicine, National University Health System, Singapore

Address for Correspondence: A/Prof Mythily Subramaniam, Research Division, Institute of Mental Health, Buangkok Green Medical Park, 10 Buangkok View, Singapore 539747.

Email: Mythily@imh.com.sg