

Current Health Event

Depression

Depression is a mood disorder that affects thoughts, feelings, and behaviours and can cause the person to suffer greatly and function poorly at work, at school and in the family. Depression is characterized by persistent sadness and a loss of interest in activities that people normally enjoy, accompanied by an inability to carry out daily activities.

Editorial note:

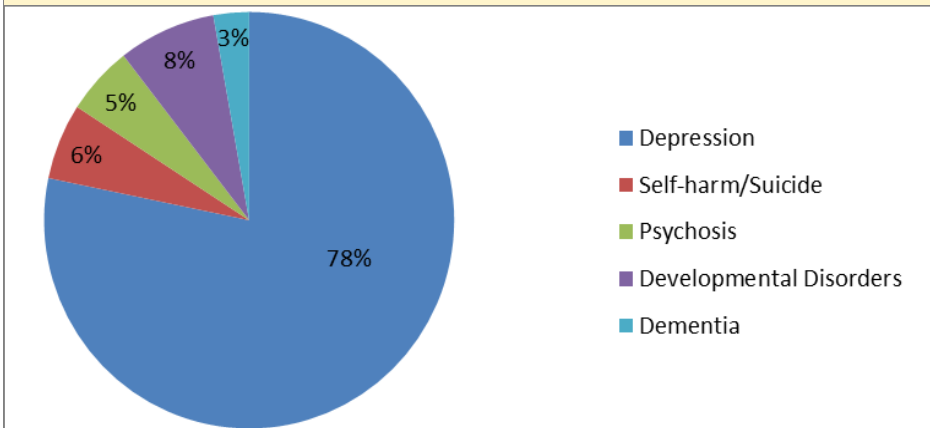
People with depression normally have several of the following symptoms for more than 14 days: loss of energy; anxiety; reduced concentration; restlessness; feelings of worthlessness, guilt, or hopelessness; change in appetite; sleeping more or less;. At its worst, depression can lead to suicide.

Depression is strongly linked with other non-communicable diseases; depression is 2-4 folds more prevalent in patients with diseases such as diabetes, stroke, and cardiovascular disease than in people who do not have physical non-communicable diseases; the opposite is also true, meaning that people with these other conditions have a higher risk of depression.

Worldwide, more than 300 million people are affected by depression, representing an increase of more than 18% between 2005 and 2015. It is the leading cause of disability worldwide and a major contributor to the overall global burden of disease.

In Lebanon, latest evidence dating from 2008 shows that depression was the single most common mental health disorder (lifetime prevalence of 9.9%) (Karam et al., 2008). According to the Global School Health Survey, depression was one of the most common mental health problems among adolescents, both in 2005 and 2011. In line with this, data from 696 cases reported so far to the National Mental Health Registry shows that depression is the second main diagnosis for psychiatric consultation (26%) after anxiety disorders (29%). In addition, amongst all other mental health diagnoses, depres-

Fig. 1: Data from mental health consultations at MOPH primary health care centres supported by supervision visits (2016-2017).



sion has the highest rate of patients attempting suicide. Registry data also shows that depression is more prevalent amongst women than men (65% vs 35% of consultations) and that females are seeking care twice more than males for depression.

Although there are known and effective treatments for depression, fewer than half of those affected receive such treatments in Lebanon, with around 6 years delay in seeking treatment (Karam et al., 2008). Barriers to effective care include a lack of resources, lack of trained health-care providers, and social stigma associated with mental disorders.

WHO response

Depression is one of the priority conditions covered by WHO's Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP), which aims at increasing services for people with mental health disorders, through care provided by health workers who are not specialists in mental health.

The National Mental Health Programme (NMHP), supported by WHO, is rolling out the mhGAP as part of the National Mental Health Strategy for Lebanon (2015-2020). So far, health staff from around 70 centres have been trained and are being coached to provide quality services.

The NMHP is also scaling up Interpersonal Therapy in collaboration with Columbia University and IMC.

The NMHP is also piloting an electronic-based mental health intervention "PM +" in collaboration with WHO.

Depression was the theme of the World Health Day celebration on 7 April 2017 under the slogan "Depression: Let's Talk". Lebanon hosted the Eastern Mediterranean Region's celebration this year, marked by a live testimony of a young patient who experienced depression, indicating the attempts of demystifying the condition long considered as social taboo. The event was followed by a one-month national media campaign led by the NMHP.

Notifiable Diseases in Lebanon [cumulative n° of cases among all residents (among Syrians)] as of 30 April 2017

Disease	2016	2017	Mar.	Apr.
Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
Polio	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
AFP	123 (17)	32 (5)	7 (3)	4 (1)
Measles	44 (18)	53 (10)	28 (1)	11 (3)
Mumps	486 (86)	111 (8)	66 (3)	24 (3)
Pertussis	97 (18)	35 (11)	11 (2)	8 (4)
Rabies	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Rubella	12 (6)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Tetanus	2 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Viral Hep. B	367 (48)	128 (26)	31 (6)	30 (5)
Water/Food Borne Diseases				
Brucellosis	402 (165)	93 (39)	26 (5)	14 (5)
Cholera	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Hydatid cyst	11 (2)	3 (1)	1 (0)	0 (0)
Typhoid fever	598 (11)	165 (4)	56 (1)	39 (1)
Viral Hep. A	519 (78)	169 (28)	34 (4)	27 (1)
Other Diseases				
Leishmaniasis	58 (52)	15 (15)	8 (8)	0 (0)
Meningitis	458 (63)	88 (20)	29 (7)	21 (7)
Viral Hep. C	116 (8)	41 (1)	7 (1)	11 (0)