



Pennsylvania Behavioral Health and Aging Coalition
Opening Doors for Older Pennsylvanians

News You Can Use...

December 2014

Holiday Blues, or Depressive Disorder?

Many people experience the “holiday blues” this time of year, but don’t always understand what causes these feelings, or if they’re actually signs of depressive disorder. Causes of the holiday blues can include overeating, increased alcohol consumption, unrealistic expectations for the holidays, and overscheduling. Being aware of these issues and knowing how to correct them can help ease the temporary anxiety or depression one is experiencing. However, if a person is experiencing more severe symptoms which are interfering with normal activity, this can be a sign of depressive disorder. Symptoms can include loss of interest in activities, feeling hopeless or helpless, difficulty concentrating, or withdrawal from others. To see a full list of what can cause the holiday blues and the full list of symptoms which can indicate depressive disorder, please visit

http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/welcome/features/20081217_holiday_blues/.

Debunking the Holiday Suicide Myth

Did you think that the number of people who attempt or complete suicide rises during the holiday season? You are not alone. In reality, suicides rates are low in December and tend to rise in the spring and fall. Why has this myth been perpetuated for so long? Researchers believe it may be related to the movie *It’s a Wonderful Life*, which portrays a man contemplating suicide around the holiday season, or the “holiday blues” that many people experience. This myth also gains traction from media reports which are more likely to repeat the myth than research the truth behind it. For the full article, including a list of warning signs of suicide, click here:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/06/holiday-suicide-myth_n_6270372.html.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can be reached at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>.



LGBT Health and Well-Being

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has released its 2014 report on the health and well-being of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) individuals. Each year, the LGBT Issues Coordinating Committee releases a report on accomplishments for the year and objectives for the coming year. This year's report includes many accomplishments in areas including cultural competency, implementation of the *Windsor* ruling, and health care reform. Next year's objectives include funding research on LGBT health inequities, prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and improving health data on LGBT populations. To view this year's full annual report, and the annual reports for the past three years, please visit <http://www.hhs.gov/lgbt/index.html>.

NIH Funds Robots to Assist People with Disabilities

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is participating in the Interagency National Robotics Initiative, which supports the development of "robots that work cooperatively with people." Some examples of robotics which could be used in the health care industry include a wearable exoskeleton which could aid stroke victims in rehabilitation, a wheelchair that responds to head movement, and interactive music therapy for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Funding for this project is approximately \$2.3 million for the next five years. To read more about the project, participants, and funding, please visit <http://www.nih.gov/news/health/dec2014/nibib-08.htm>.

Are Substance Problems Among Older Americans a Looming Crisis?

A combination of factors is leading to an increase in substance use problems in older Americans. "Increases in use often occur in conjunction with significant life changes, such as retirement and the death of a loved partners and peers. Rather than aiming to 'get high' like sensation-seeking teenagers and young adults, these people typically use drugs and alcohol to alleviate the physical and psychological pain resulting from losses, social isolation, and mental and medical illness." A lack of treatment facilities and groups targeted to older adults can make treatment difficult, as they are facing different stressors from younger addicts. To read the full article, please visit <http://www.psmag.com/navigation/health-and-behavior/substance-problems-among-older-americans-looming-crisis-95359/>.

Interested in learning more about older adults and substance use in Pennsylvania? Check out "Addicts, Overdose Victims Skew Older" at <http://triblive.com/news/westmoreland/5547082-74/drug-heroin-coroner#axzz3LhUaG27G>.



Immunization Action Coalition Offers Handouts for Patients and Staff

The Immunization Action Coalition, “works to increase immunization rates and prevent disease by creating and distributing educational materials for health professionals and the public that enhance the delivery of safe and effective immunization services.” The Coalition has provided an index of vaccine handouts including clinic resources and information indexed by vaccine or topic. The site also offers a language index, including handouts in 13 different languages. According to the website, “technical accuracy has been confirmed by immunization experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.” To access these free handouts, click here:

<http://www.immunize.org/handouts/>.

New Test May Predict Alzheimer’s 10 Years Before Diagnosis

New research shows that a blood test to predict Alzheimer’s Disease may be possible. Using current and frozen blood samples, researchers were able to tell which samples belonged to individuals with Alzheimer’s Disease by measuring levels of an insulin receptor. While this research still needs to be replicated and tested on larger sample sizes, researchers are optimistic that this test, or one similar to it, will be viable in the future. To read more, please visit <http://time.com/3590494/alzheimers-blood-test/>.

If this test were available, would you want to know if you were going to develop Alzheimer’s Disease? Read arguments for and against at

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-12-11/tests-may-soon-predict-alzheimer-s-do-you-want-to-know-.html>.

Overdose Reversal Drug Can Help Older Adults

Governor Corbett signed Act 139 into law, allowing first responders and others to administer naloxone to individuals experiencing an opioid overdose. Naloxone is a medication that can reverse an overdose that is caused by an opioid drug (i.e. prescription pain medication or heroin). When administered during an overdose, naloxone blocks the effects of opioids on the brain and restores breathing within two to eight minutes – hopefully this provides enough time for emergency responders to begin treating the individual. Older adults can specifically benefit from naloxone due to the fact that they are often prescribed opioid pain medicine such as codeine, fentanyl, Vicodin, Demerol and others. Anyone who frequently comes in contact with older adults taking such medications can talk to their doctors to request a prescription to keep on hand.

Click on the following link for more information:

<http://www.ddap.pa.gov/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=1938383&mode=2>



Coalition News

Upcoming In-Person Trainings from the Coalition

- Free Webinars
 - [12/17/14 HIV/AIDS and Aging](#)
 - [1/21/15 Traumatic Brain Injury and Neurodegenerative Disorders](#)
 - [2/4/15 Understanding Hoarding Behaviors in Older Adults](#)
 - [2/18/15 Psychiatric Issues of Dementia](#)
- Senior Bullying Seminar
 - [3/18/15 Centre County](#)
 - [4/29/15 Allegheny County](#)
 - [5/20/15 Crawford County](#)
 - [6/2/15 Lackawanna County](#)
- Mental Health First Aid
 - [4/28/15 Centre County](#)
- A Simulation of Hearing Distressing Voices
 - [3/4/15 Montgomery County](#)
 - [3/26/15 Warren County](#)
 - [4/21/15 Allegheny County](#)
 - [5/6/15 Blair County](#)
- Medicare/Medicaid Basics for Mental Health Professionals
 - [3/4/15 Montgomery County](#)
 - [3/26/15 Warren County](#)
 - [5/6/15 Blair County](#)

Did You Know? Customized Behavioral Health and Aging Training is Available

Below is a link to the training topics we currently offer through the Coalition. We can come to your site and offer the trainings, or we also have regular training opportunities available that you will receive notice about as a member of the Coalition.

<http://www.olderpa.org/Default.aspx?pageId=1080869>

Sponsorship Available

The Coalition provides training opportunities to more than 1000 participants each year. We now offer the opportunity to sponsor Coalition trainings, providing your organization access to individuals in the behavioral health and aging fields. Contact Rebecca May-Cole (Rebecca@olderpa.org) or 717-541-4219 ext. 106 for more information.



Donate Now!

Help support the work of the Coalition! Join us in improving the behavioral health of older Pennsylvanians by [donating](#) to PBHAC. Your [tax deductible donation](#) will help us meet our mission to promote wellness, enjoyment and engagement in life, including care, services and community support, that respect the behavioral health needs and values of older Pennsylvanians and their caregivers.

Previous copies of PBHAC's News You Can Use are available on the website at www.olderPA.org/newsletter

