

Letter to the Editor
Canadian Journal on Aging

Note on the prevalence of depressive conditions in the elderly

In a paper recently published in this Journal (Cappeliez, 1988), I reviewed the research literature pertaining to the prevalence of depressions among older adults, addressing the spectrum of depressive conditions from minor, transient states of affliction to clinically severe depressions.

I am concerned that readers may misunderstand the second paragraph of the conclusions (p. 434), if this section is read out of the context of the research review which precedes it. This paragraph attempts to summarize estimations of the prevalence of depressive conditions among older adults in the following fashion.

The available research literature suggests that 20–25% of older adults manifest dysphoria (manifested by such signs as global dissatisfaction, pessimism, boredom) at *various degrees of intensity*. About half of these cases (about 10–15% of the *overall population of older adults*) present depressive symptoms which are more serious and which vary from moderate to severe. Approximately half of these cases (i.e. 5 to 8%) *of the overall population of older adults* appear to suffer from a major depression, which meets the criteria of a systematically derived psychiatric diagnosis. A recent review by Newmann (1989) concurs with these estimations

References

- Cappeliez, P. (1988). Some thoughts on the prevalence and etiology of depressive conditions in the elderly. *Canadian Journal of Aging*, 7, 431–440.
Newmann, J.P. (1989). Aging and depression. *Psychology and Aging*, 4, 150–165.

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