

Over Half of Young People With Depression Don't Get Help for at Least a Year

by George Citroner on May 11, 2022 — Fact checked by Dana K. Cassell (Healthline.com)

Researchers from the City University of New York found many young adults experiencing a major depressive episode (MDE) aren't seeking needed mental health care.

Study co-author Wenhua Lu, PhD, assistant medical professor, CUNY School of Medicine, told Healthline she'd conducted previous research that showed widening treatment gaps for young adults with depression over the past decade.

Wu said they wanted to "understand why young adults with major depression did not use mental health services in the past decade."

Over half reported not receiving treatment for depression

Wu's study Trusted Source analyzed data 2011-2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health from over 21,000 patients ages 18 to 25 diagnosed with an MDE in the previous 12 months, with more than 11,000 self-reporting they had not received any treatment.

The study was published this week in *JAMA Network Open*. Trusted Source

Researchers found that cost was consistently the greatest barrier to seeking treatment for depression among young adults from 2011 to 2019.

"I was not surprised that cost remains the top barrier to seeking depression treatment among young adults," said Wu. "As it requires fundamental systemic change to address the affordability issue of mental health treatment."

What was surprising, she said, was that more young adults reported inadequate insurance coverage for depression treatment in recent years.

"Considering that evidence has shown the effectiveness of Medicaid expansion has reduced the rate of uninsured individuals and improved access to care for adults with depression since its implementation in 2014," said Wu.

Findings indicate that women represented over 60 percent of the untreated, and 39.4 percent were between 18 and 21.

About 30 percent of those untreated for MDE had a household income below \$20,000, and over half lived with severe impairments related to the condition.

The study authors noted that relying on self-reported data might have skewed their findings due to social desirability bias Trusted Source.

Lu and their team also found socio-demographic gaps in mental healthcare.

They discovered that white participants were more likely to find treatment than Hispanic and Asian participants. Hispanic individuals were also more concerned about others finding out they sought treatment.

Male participants were more concerned than surveyed female participants about negative reactions

from neighbors or their communities if they sought treatment.

Indigenous people reported significant financial barriers to MDE treatment.

Native Americans were over three times more likely than whites to lack insurance coverage for mental healthcare, and researchers pointed out that new policies are needed "to close the Medicaid coverage gap, especially for Native American individuals."

More effort needed

Wu said that based on her findings, many young adults with depression still don't seek treatment because of stigma and lack of motivation.

She warned that untreated depression increases a young adult's risk for alcohol and drug use disorders.

"More seriously," Wu said. "Depression can lead to suicide, which is one of the three leading causes of death among young adults ages 18 to 25."

She emphasized that continued efforts are needed to destigmatize mental health treatment at the community level, particularly for college students and young men.

Many factors contribute to rising depression

Dr. Alex Dimitriu, double board certified in psychiatry and sleep medicine and founder of Menlo Park Psychiatry & Sleep Medicine and BrainfoodMD, said people ages 18 to 25 face specific stressors that may make them more likely to be depressed.

"As teenagers leave their homes and effectively start their lives," Dimitriu said. "The impact of social media and the internet may be particularly stifling to this important period of coming of age."

He explained that the 18 to 25 age group is a time of significant socialization.

While the study looked at data from before the COVID-19 pandemic started, new research has found an increase of people with symptoms of depression during the pandemic, according to a 2021 study published in the *Lancet Regional Health – Americas*. Trusted Source

"It is possible that during COVID and more generally, in a time of increased social media and less in-person socialization, we may be seeing a rise in the rates of depression and anxiety," said Dimitriu.

Dimitriu said depression could severely affect how we perceive life experiences.

"Untreated depression as well as other mental health conditions result in what I call 'missed magical moments,'" he said. "It's those times when everything around you is going well, but you are emotionally absent."

He advised that online questionnaires and even brief online consultations with mental health professionals should be made more readily available. Additionally, he said legal changes could be made that could facilitate getting people into treatment

Hunt for killers of anti-mafia prosecutor on honeymoon



Marcelo Pecci

by Vanessa Buschschlüter
BBC News

Police from Colombia and Paraguay are working with agents from the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the FBI to hunt down the killers of an anti-mafia prosecutor.

Paraguayan prosecutor Marcelo Pecci, 45, was shot dead on Tuesday on a beach in Colombia, where he was on honeymoon.

Pecci investigated high-profile corruption and money-laundering cases in his native Paraguay.

His murder was likely related to his fight against crime, police say.

Pecci and his wife were on the sixth and final day of their honeymoon in Colombia when he was killed on Baru, an idyllic island off the Caribbean coast.

Just two hours earlier, his wife, journalist Claudia Aguilera, had posted a picture on her Instagram account announcing that they were expecting a baby.

She said that they were on a stretch of private beach of Decameron Hotel on Tuesday morning when her husband was targeted.

"Two men attacked Marcelo. They came in a small boat, or on a jet ski, the truth is I did not see well," she told *El Tiempo* newspaper.

She said that one of the men got off and "without a word he shot Marcelo twice, one [bullet] hit him in the face and another in the back".

Colombian police have released a blurry photo and a sketch of a suspect and announced a \$500,000 (£410,000) reward for information leading to an arrest.

Police Chief Jorge Vargas said that US and Paraguayan investigators would help Colombian security forces

hunt down the killers and those who may have ordered the assassination.

Gen Vargas said that the "big hypothesis" was that the murder was related to some of the high-profile cases Pecci had been involved in Paraguay.

Pecci was part of "A Ultranza Py", the biggest operation against cocaine trafficking and money laundering in Paraguay's history.

According to Paraguayan media, the operation broke up a ring which smuggled drugs from cocaine-producing hotspots Colombia and Bolivia through Paraguay to Europe.

Pecci was part of the international team which earlier this year seized hundreds of millions of dollars in assets and arrested dozens of suspects.

The US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs said that "Pecci's work fighting organised crime stands as an example to us all - especially his efforts to bring to justice those who engaged in money laundering, drug trafficking, and corruption".

While Pecci had bodyguards in Paraguay, he did not have any protection while on his honeymoon in Colombia and the Colombian police said it had not been aware of his presence in the country.

His wife said that he had not received any threats although a friend of Pecci's has since told Paraguayan media of a suspicious incident on his wedding day.

Sebastian Achá told ABC newspaper that a SUV without number plates had tried to block Pecci's car on his way back from the ceremony on 30 April, an attempt which was thwarted by Pecci's bodyguard, who was driving at the time.

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at a lower cost.

"Laws should be changed to make it easier for doctors and therapists to provide guidance more readily and with less liability," emphasized Dimitriu. "This would reduce the overhead of seeking and getting help."

The bottom line

Many young adults aren't seeking needed treatment for depression, according to new research.

Experts say there are several reasons why, but that cost is the greatest factor.