

Running Title: Major Depressive Disorder in America

Major Depressive Disorder in America

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Introduction

Major depression is a serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). The Archives of General Psychiatry state approximately 14.8 million American adults or about 6.7 percent of the population experience depression in a given year (Archives of General Psychiatry, 2005). Even though depression is a widespread problem within the American population, many people who are experiencing some of the troubling symptoms of depression which can include a change in appetite, sleep, energy, mood and personal interests do not obtain treatment due to the associated stigma with depression. A website entitled Depression and Suicide: Overcoming Obstacles to Treatment of Clinical Depression estimates that as many as 75% of people with depression don't seek treatment (Depression and Suicide, 2008). Another barrier to proper treatment is inadequate funding; many people cannot afford proper mental health treatment. Fortunately, there is a wide range of available treatment options for people with depression which include anti-depressant medications, psychiatrists, counselors, support groups and natural remedies. Intervention is needed to help people experiencing major depression overcome the stigma to obtain needed treatment and to enable all people, regardless of means, to receive needed treatment.

This analysis will use systems theory to examine the issues surrounding major depression in American adults. An outline of the history of the problem, the systems and stakeholders involved in the problem and the needs and capacities of the involved stakeholders will support the analysis. The analysis will be conducted from a technology perspective and –as a result-technology will be emphasized in the discussion of needs as well as in the solution which will be presented within a future report.

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Problem Definition

This section will be used to explore the problem of major depression in American adults. First, the history of major depression in American adults will be discussed and next the assumptions that are being made in this analysis about the problem of depression in American adults will be examined.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders involved in major depression extend beyond the 14.8 million American adults who are estimated to be experiencing depression each year (DBSA, 2008). Families are stakeholders who have to help provide medical and emotional care to family members who are experiencing depression. Fifteen to 20% of US families are caring for an older relative and a survey revealed that 58% of the elderly population that is being cared for have clinically significant depressive symptoms good data (Family Caregiver Alliance, 1997). Depression affects the economy so the economy is a stakeholder. Depression accounts for close to \$12 billion in lost workdays each year and depression's annual toll on U.S. businesses amounts to about \$70 billion in medical expenses and other costs (The Wall Street Journal, 2001, The National Institute of Mental Health, 1999). Medical practitioners such as psychiatrists, pharmacists and counselors who provide help to people with depression are a stakeholder who arguably benefit-at least financially-from depression. Depression is a money-making industry which is

proven by the fact that anti-depressant medication makes 21 billion dollars annually (safedepressiontreatment, 2008). The government is a stakeholder because there are several government policies (i.e. Mental Health Parity Act of 1996) and government funding (i.e. Medicare and Medicaid) which greatly affect the treatment of depression. There are several depression advocacy organizations such as the National Alliance for Mental Health, Mental Health Association of America and the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance which are stakeholders who influence policy and treatment for depressed people.

History

Diagnosis for Major Depression

Depression is an age-old problem and various people throughout history such as Abraham Lincoln have been affected with depression. However, with the advance of time new tools have been developed to clinically determine what depression is. Currently, a commonly used clinical measurement for major depression is the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-Fourth Edition (DSM-IV) presented by the American Psychiatric Association. The DSM-IV measures affective symptoms which reveal depressed mood and feelings of worthlessness or guilt, behavioral symptoms which include difficulty concentrating or making decisions and somatic symptoms which include insomnia or hypersomnia (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). The DSM-IV measurement scale is a great and reliable tool used by psychiatrists to diagnose major depression.

However, a problem associated with using the DSM IV measurement scale is psychiatrists must administer the test and unfortunately, many people who experience depression do not want to go to the psychiatrist because of the stigma and shame of admitting to others or themselves that they need a doctor. Also, they do not have the \$s. There is some on-line information intended to steer people experiencing depression to a doctor. According to WebMD, someone may have major depression if they experience five or more of the following symptoms for at least a two-week period: persistent sadness, feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness or hopelessness, loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities, difficulty concentrating and complaints of poor memory, worsening of co-existing chronic disease, insomnia or oversleeping, weight gain or loss, fatigue, lack of energy, anxiety, agitation, irritability, thoughts of suicide or death, slow speech, slow movements, headache, stomachache and digestive problems (WebMD, 2008). Patients who realize they have been experiencing five or more symptoms for more than two weeks are highly encouraged to go to a medical practitioner who will most likely administer a clinical measurement tool for depression such as the DSM-IV.

Assumptions

Depression is such a vague term within the American society because one word: depression is used to describe many different forms of depression. For example, depression can arise from a situational event such as the death of a loved one or a divorce. Depression can also be a medical condition caused by a chemical imbalance within the brain. The primary assumption made in this analysis is major depression refers to the chemical imbalance within the brain rather than another form or definition of depression. When this analysis uses statistics it is assumed that subjects who are depressed are experiencing the medical definition of depression found by measurements

like the DSM-IV rather than less accurate societal definitions of depression. Another assumption is that depressed individuals affect other subsystems including family, friends, social service providers and the economy. Research reveals evidence that depressed people are intertwined with subsystems in a way that affects everyone. For example, the economy suffers when depressed people have decreased productivity in the workplace (The Wall Street Journal, 2001, The National Institute of Mental Health, 1999). Depressed people's support system, such as their family are affected by depression as they exert energy and money into trying to help the depressed person (Family Caregiver Alliance, 1997).

Analysis of Problem

The systems perspective has been chosen for this analysis. According to Dr. Schoech's book entitled *Human Services Technology*, "systems theory is a perspective or way of looking at complex phenomena such as organizations" (Schoech, 1999). The systems perspective will provide a thorough and all-encompassing outlook and it will be evaluated along with the environment and subsystems.

Environment

The United States

Depression is both a global and national problem that particularly plagues the United States. Over six percent of American adults have depression each year (Archives of General Psychiatry, 2005). Major depression is the leading cause of disability in the United States between the ages of 14-44 (National Institute of Mental Health, 2008). Despite the freedom and prosperity within America, it is clear that major depression is a significant problem that plagues both a large portion of individuals experiencing depression and the American society as a whole. The United States is the environment for the analysis using the system perspective to analyze persons experiencing major depression.

Systems and Subsystems

American Adults with Major Depression

Characteristics of the System. The system experiencing the problem is American adults who are experiencing major depression. Depression has more stakeholders such as family members and medical professionals administering treatment rather than just the persons exhibiting depressive symptoms. Since all stakeholders are so involved with the problem of major depression, the stakeholders become elements within the systems perspective because they play an integral part in being part of the system that is impacted by major depression. Both family members and medical professionals are elements that interact with depressed individuals by providing emotional and medical care to depressed individuals. Depressed individuals receive input in the form of medical care (i.e. antidepressant medication, counseling) and emotional care (i.e. family support) that helps them combat their depression. The throughput and output that occurs in this interaction is limited because depressed individuals are not expected to give much back when they are focusing on receiving treatment to alleviate and cure their depression. The goal is that depressed people can receive effective input to help cure their depression. Once this occurs, depressed people will be able to provide throughput and output in the future which would be increased productivity in the workforce and decreased stress on family and medical professionals who are responsible for providing the input to help them.

At first the depression system functions as a closed system to enable the depressed individual to get thorough and needed care without being expected to interact with surrounding systems. However, a goal is that the depressed person will gather the strength and healing to graduate from a closed system into an open system where they will be able to contribute to people around them. According to the systems perspective, entropy occurs when depressed people cannot function in a normal and healthy capacity because depressed individuals take energy and productivity from surrounding systems such as the economy, the government and the energy of family members and medical professionals. However, it is hopeful that the entropy can be stopped if depressed individuals heal and no longer take life and energy from surrounding systems. [Good discussion.](#)

Decisions. American adults with major depression are faced with a variety of decisions to make about how to treat their condition. American adults with major depression must decide what medical practitioner they are going to visit for help with the symptoms of major depression and they must decide what type of treatment (i.e. medicine, counseling a natural remedy, et cetera) they want to use. Patients must also decide how they will be able to pay for obtained services which can be very costly to them and their family. These decisions impact the patient's treatment for their depression. In addition, the patient's decisions impact the patient's natural support network of family and friends who are providing care as the patient experiences depressive symptoms. American adults with depression are the stakeholders who are making decisions about how to treat their own depression. In some cases, American adults with depression may accept the help of other stakeholders such as family and friends, medical professionals and the government to aid them in making and paying for medical decisions. Currently, American adults can ask doctors and social-service providers for assistance in making needed decisions. Technology serves as a helpful aid because American adults with depression can use the internet to search for help with making needed decisions. Depressed individuals can also join blogs to obtain information and social support with other people who are experiencing depression. [Good.](#)

Needs. There are several needs American adults with major depression have that if met would aid them in making decisions about their problem. American adults with major depression need motivation and encouragement to confront and cure their depression. A symptom of depression is lack of motivation so caregivers are needed to help depressed people overcome their possible lack of motivation to seek treatment. Along with motivation and encouragement, American adults with major depression need assistance to obtain resources to understand, assess, evaluate, pay for and choose treatments to combat their depression. Finally, persons with major depression need avenues through which they can share their stories to provide assistance, collaboration and motivation with one another. [Good.](#)

Natural Support Network

Characteristics of the system. The closest system to American adults with major depression is their natural support system which consists of friends and family. Unfortunately, there is a lot of stigma associated with depression so many depressed people only share their struggle with trusted individuals such as close family and friends. Many depressed people do not want their struggle shared outside of their immediate

support network because they fear that their job or others' opinion of them may be jeopardized if their struggle becomes public. The stigma associated with depression causes the natural support network to be a closed system with little interaction, input, and feedback into the outside environment because depressed people do not want their condition to become public knowledge. The stigma can cause entropy and isolation within the natural support network because trusted friends and family members cannot obtain outside support or knowledge to help provide care and assistance to the depressed individual.

Decisions. Caregivers, such as friends and family, are faced with many decisions about how to provide care to the depressed individual. In some cases, if the depressed person is exhibiting severe depressive symptoms that include suicidal ideation or thoughts, caregivers are faced with the burdensome decision of having to take the depressed individual to the doctor and—in some cases—committing the depressed person against their will. Caregivers are stakeholders that are responsible for helping depressed people obtain needed care. Technology serves as a great aid to caregivers because caregivers can search the internet to find medical information that can help them make more informed decisions. Caregivers can also join blogs to exchange ideas and social support with other people in similar situations.

Needs. Caregivers need helpful resources and information about how to best care for the depressed individual. Caregivers need support from medical professionals and their own support network to help provide information and energy for the burdensome task of providing care to a depressed person. [Very good.](#)

Medical Professionals

Characteristics of the system. Medical professionals are a system that is often called upon by depressed individuals and their family members to provide medical support to depressed individuals. Medical professionals are an open system because they give medical support to other systems such as depressed individuals and their family members. Medical professionals provide a lot of information or throughput that treats, equips, helps and aids people experiencing depression.

Decisions. Medical professionals are faced with many critical decisions regarding how to provide the best possible medical care to patients exhibiting depressive symptoms. There are a lot of options including many different types of anti-depressant medicines and treatments and medical professionals are responsible for choosing the best possible treatment among the vast array of options. Medical professionals must stay informed about current treatment options so they can make informed decisions. Medical professionals are a stakeholder that impacts the recovery of depressed people. Technology is a great aid in helping medical professionals make informed decisions. Technology helps medical professionals exchange research studies through on-line medical journals. Technology provides the internet to enable medical professionals to quickly exchange information and ideas with medical colleagues.

Needs. Medical professionals need current and reliable information from research studies and pharmaceutical drug companies to help them make informed decisions. Medical professionals need patients who will comply with what they prescribe. Medical professionals need trusted colleagues they can learn from. Medical professionals need

their own support network to help provide them with their own energy to help them make the best possible decisions. [Very good.](#)

The American Economy and Society at Large

Characteristics of the system. The American economy and society at large are affected by depression and –in turn- affect depression. The American economy suffers when depressed people cannot be as productive in the workforce as needed. American society doesn't fully understand or accept depression and the associated stigma keeps many people from accepting needed treatment. The American society is an open system because depression affects society and the American society in turn affects people experiencing depression by producing an impairing stigma.

Decisions. American society is faced with a decision about how to treat the problem of depression. It is clear depression is a problem in America so society must decide how to respond to the problem that is affecting the economy and many individuals directly. The American society is a stakeholder that impacts the state of depression in America. Technology serves as a great aid because information about depression can be circulated through websites to help provide information that gives society an accurate and informed view of how to confront the problem of depression in America.

Needs. American society needs information and education to better understand and respond to the problem of major depression. Increased education may help alleviate the stigma associated with depression. Reduced stigma would help people with depression obtain more help and social support needed to combat their depression. Reduced stigma would help the American society's economy because depressed people would get help quicker which would help their productivity within the workplace return to normal at a quicker pace. [good](#)

The American Government

Characteristics of the system. The American government is affected by depression because it strives to provide services such as Medicaid and Medicare funding that help depressed American citizens. The American government also has policies that aim to help American citizens who are experiencing depression and other mental illness. The American government is an open system because the problem of depression affects policies and government funding. The American government also affects depressed people by providing funding and policies that hopefully help alleviate and fund the problem of depression.

Decisions. The American government is faced with the decision of how to most affectively treat the problem of depression. Historically, there has been a struggle of having enough funds to support mental illness. President Bush helped enact the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 to try to get increased support for mental health services (American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry, 2008). The American government is faced with ongoing decisions about how to best use government funds and policies to help alleviate and cure depression.

Needs. The American government needs policies and funding to meet the mental health needs of American residents. Currently, the United States Department of Health and Human Services has some initiatives such as The Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) and the New Freedom Commission on Mental Health that need guidance and

funding to enact policies that will help depressed people. Unfortunately, currently medicare and Medicaid coverage is not extensive enough to provide proper mental health care to low-income Americans. The American government needs to find ways to increase their provision of resources and services for depressed Americans within the budget limitations set by society or to change these limitations.

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Advocacy Organizations

Characteristics of the system. Advocacy organizations such as the National Alliance of Mental Illness, the National Association of Mental Health and the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance have all been affected by the problem of depression in American society. Advocacy organizations have been formed to create increased services, improved policies and increased funding to help alleviate and cure depression within America. Advocacy organizations are an open system because the problem of depression affects advocates. The work done by advocacy organizations affect people with depression because they obtain increased awareness and funding that helps depressed individuals.

Decisions. Advocacy organizations are faced with on-going decisions about how to best use their resources to advocate and create needed change. Advocacy organizations are faced with decisions about what depressed individuals need. Advocacy organizations are faced with decisions about how to get volunteers and funding to reach their goals.

Needs. Advocacy organizations need resources such as funding and volunteer to reach their goals. Advocacy organizations need to have good information about the problem of depression to help them strategically plan their efforts. Advocacy organizations need support from the community and the government so that they can effectively partner with people to create needed change and to provide necessary resources. Good.

Results

This section contains a summary of the needs identified by the systems above and rank orders them according to the priority of the need. Following this is an analysis of the capacities of each system along with how the system can be used to meet the needs.

Prioritizing Needs

The following section lists the priority needs from the analysis. Needs were prioritized based on the number of systems that experienced the need and how closely related the need was to the client system being American adults with major depression very good.

Increased Resources and Services for People Experiencing Depression

Based on the needs of each system listed above, the most important need to be addressed is increased resources and services for people experiencing depression. People with depression need good resources and services such as funding assistance to help them obtain proper medical help. While the government provides some funding through Medicare and Medicaid, increased resources are needed both from government and private social services agencies. Proper assistance should not be denied to in-need persons simply because they cannot pay and resources need to be set in place to ensure money is never a barrier keeping people from needed assistance. All stakeholders including people experiencing depression, family members helping depressed people,

medical professionals, the American society, the government and advocacy organizations would benefit from increased resources and services for people experiencing depression. Increased resources would alleviate stress on all stakeholders and increased resources would bring all involved parties closer to a cure and a solution for depression. [I hope you subscribed to the online version of nonprofit times, which I emailed out several times. It contains a lot of information about fundraising and online fundraising. Hope you are looking at groups like meetup and MoveOn as to how they use the Internet to generate resources. Also, the Obama campaign has done a great job of using the Internet for generating resources.](#)

Current and Reliable Information about Depression

Based on the needs of each system listed above, the second most important need to be addressed is current and reliable information about depression. All stakeholders including depressed individuals, caregivers, medical professionals and the American society need accurate and current information about major depression. Correct information will help depressed individuals recognize and treat their depression. Accurate information will help caregivers have information to equip them to be a helpful support and aid to their loved ones who are experiencing depression. Current information will help medical professionals provide quality care to depressed individuals. Accurate information about depression will help society properly handle the problem of depression and it will help alleviate the stigma associated with depression.

Emotional Support for Individuals Experiencing Depression

One symptom of depression can be a lack of motivation. Caregivers, medical professionals and society are in a position to provide needed support to people with depression. If caregivers, medical professionals and society have compassion they will be able to provide needed emotional support in the form of encouragement, motivation, understanding and empathy. [Social networking sites like MySpace, might be helpful here.](#)

[Good list and summary](#)

Capacities to Address Needs

Increased Resources and Services for People Experiencing Depression

Technology is a great aid in helping create increased resources and services for people experiencing depression. Technology can be used to create fund-raising materials and to collect money through on-line giving programs. Technology can be used to disseminate information that may motivate the government to provide increased resources and services for people experiencing depression. Technology can be used to rally more volunteers and move more donors to help increase resources and services for people experiencing depression. Technology would help all stakeholders including people experiencing depression, family members and medical professionals by uniting them and guiding them to increasing resources and services. [This sounds more like your solution which should be in part B. What capacities do each of these groups/stakeholders possess to help in any IT based solution.](#)

Current and Reliable Information about Depression

Technology provides a great capacity for providing current and reliable information about depression to various stakeholders including individuals who are experiencing depression, caregivers, medical practitioners and society. Medical journals

and medical websites such as The National Institute of Mental Health and Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance provide great and accurate information about depression that need to be shared with all stakeholders (NAMI, DBSA, 2008). Research and information need to be collected on an ongoing basis so individuals who are experiencing depression must be willing to participate in needed studies. Doctors must be willing to record their findings in medical journals. Caregivers must be willing to read and learn so they can be informed as they provide help to loved ones who are experiencing depression. Society must be willing to learn an accurate view of depression so they can effectively respond to the problem of depression. What are the capacities of all stakeholders including the client and significant others. I think these capacities need to be listed.

Emotional Support for Individuals Experiencing Depression

Fortunately, there is already a team of medical professionals who are doctors, researchers and social workers that are employed by hospitals and national alliances such as the National Association of Mental Illness and the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (NAMI, DBSA, 2008). The medical professionals who have committed their professional life to providing support to individuals who are experiencing depression are a great emotional and medical support that is already in place. Hopefully, medical professionals can develop information that can equip and motivate caregivers and society to better develop skills to provide needed emotional support to individuals who have depression. Hopefully, information can be shared and –as a result- more people will be equipped to provide needed emotional support.

Conclusion

The problem is 14.8 million Americans experience major depression each year. Depression involves a lot of stakeholders that extend beyond the individuals who are experiencing depression. Family and friends are burdened with caring for their loved one experiencing depression; medical practitioners have the responsibility of helping alleviate and cure depression; society is affected with the economic and social burden of responding to the problem of depression and the government and advocacy organizations are challenged with how to best respond to the problem of depression. Since major depression is a large problem in America, it is clear that the problem needs to be addressed. Increased funding and resources are needed to ensure all people with depression have access to services that can help alleviate depression. Current and accurate information about depression is needed for all stakeholders. Social support from family, medical practitioners and society, rather than the current and problematic stigma that is associated with depression is needed to help combat the problem of depression.

Good

Resources

American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry (2008). Retrieved March 31, 2008 from www.aagponline.org/advocacy/facts_menhealthpar.asp

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Grading Checklist

| Writing | Max points | Your Points |
|---|------------|-------------|
| Well written, well organized, with headings & subheadings, each having introductions and conclusions | 15 | <u>15</u> |
| APA format used, sources of information identified, and grammar/spell checker obviously used | 5 | <u>5</u> |
| Introduction | 0 | 0 |
| Clearly identified the agency, services, settings, stakeholders, and environment of the problem/situation | 10 | <u>10</u> |
| Introductory section states what the analysis will and will not contain | 10 | <u>10</u> |
| Says why the analysis is important | 10 | <u>10</u> |
| Problem/situation | 0 | 0 |
| Defines the problem/situation addressed | 10 | <u>10</u> |

| | | |
|--|-----|------------|
| Specifies the system, subsystem and the environment surrounding the problem/situation | 10 | <u>10</u> |
| Defines the stakeholders surrounding the problem/situation (may be included in the systems analysis) | 10 | <u>10</u> |
| Identifies any relevant history about the problem/situation <u>history of solution attempted and why they have not worked would be useful. Also, trends on depression would be helpful. Is the problem getting much worse or better and why? Do we know why?</u> | 10 | <u>8</u> |
| Define any relevant assumptions that you are making about the problem/situation | 10 | <u>10</u> |
| Decisions that are involved with the problem/situation (if applicable) | 0 | 0 |
| State the major decisions involved, who makes them, who is impacted, etc. | 10 | <u>10</u> |
| For each decision presented, state what technology/information is currently is used | 10 | <u>10</u> |
| Results of your assessment in terms of client/situation needs & strengths for change | 0 | 0 |
| For each decision presented, state what strengths exist on which to build a solution | 15 | <u>12</u> |
| For each decision presented, state what needs exist that should be addressed | 15 | <u>15</u> |
| Discuss the priority of the needs identified and the criteria used to obtain the priority | 5 | <u>5</u> |
| Conclusion | 0 | 0 |
| Summarize the problem, situation, and key findings | 5 | <u>5</u> |
| Overall information and quality | 0 | 0 |
| Information supported, e.g., literature, research, textbook, application reviews, web sites, users surveys, interviews, etc. <u>Maybe use some of the reading in the course, the course blog, class discussion, etc.</u> | 15 | <u>14</u> |
| Covers the topic well, yet all references to solutions left for the solutions paper | 10 | <u>8</u> |
| Overall quality of analysis | 15 | <u>14</u> |
| Total of all scores (180-200=A; 160-179=B; 140-159=C; 120-139=D; etc.) | 200 | <u>191</u> |

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List several things about the analysis you liked

- Very good work. You went step by step and did a good assessment

List several things about the analysis that could be improved

- Minor problems as noted in the text

Additional comment

Very good work overall.

