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MENTAL HEALTH in the HEADLINES

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HEALTH REFORM UPDATE

Negotiators to Make Key Decision on Financing, Exchanges

Negotiators involved in merging the House and Senate health care plans will be making key decisions on which approach to incorporate in a final bill. Some observers say the House bill is better on coverage, affordability and insurance regulations. But they also point out that the Senate bill is better on cost control. President Obama has indicated that he prefers the financing included in the Senate bill that taxes high-cost health plans. Many House Democrats dislike this approach, which is also opposed by many labor unions because the tax would potentially hit a number of generous union-sponsored health plans. Another key issue is the type of insurance exchanges that would be implemented. The Senate established a series of statewide exchanges, while the House prefers a single, national exchange that they say would increase choice for consumers. (MHH Reporting, 1/11/10)

***TODAY'S NEWS**

Many Depressed Adults Going Without Proper Treatment

Most people diagnosed with recent depression don't get adequate treatment and it is especially true in minority populations, a new study finds. A national survey of more than 15,000 adults found that 8.3

percent met the diagnostic criteria for major depression during the previous year. About half those diagnosed received some form of treatment for depression. But less than a quarter were treated using strategies considered effective and used in accordance with American Psychiatric Association practice guidelines, according to the study, which appears in the *Archives of General Psychiatry*. It also found that Mexican Americans, African Americans and Caribbean blacks were even less likely to receive adequate care than others. ([Palm Beach Post](#), 1/05/10)

Study Finds More College Students Reporting Mental Health Conditions

Five times as many high school and college students are dealing with anxiety and other mental health issues as youth of the same age who were studied during the Great Depression, a new study finds. The findings, which will be published in a future issue of *Clinical Psychology Review*, were collected from responses to the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. Overall, an average of five times as many students in 2007 surpassed thresholds in one or more mental health categories, compared with those who did so in 1938. A few individual categories increased at an even greater rate—with six times as many scoring high for depression and anxiety. Some say societal pressures contribute to the increase. Others question the reliability of the data because many who answered the questionnaire were students in introductory psychology courses. ([Associated Press](#), 1/11/10)

Budget Cuts Hit State, Local Mental Health Services as Demand Rises

As demand for state and local mental health services has risen since the economic downturn, budget cuts are making it harder for states and communities to serve the public. In Iowa, several counties have long waiting lists for services. In Oklahoma, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Commissioner Terri White said her agency has already cut \$16 million from its budget and that additional cuts would force it to reduce programs and turn away some of the 55,000 people who receive treatment and recovery services every year. The state is facing a shortfall of \$730 million for the current fiscal year that ends June 30. In Maine, advocates are fighting proposed cuts that would result in a loss of \$90 million in mental

health funding. Law enforcement officials say the cuts would shift costs rather than solve the problem and argue that community-based treatment is more cost-effective. (MHH Reporting, 1/10/10)

More Adults Prescribed Two or More Drugs for Mental Health Condition

Adults who are being treated for a mental health condition are more likely to be prescribed two or more drugs than a decade ago, a new report finds. Dr. Ramin Mojtabai of the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University and Dr. Mark Olfson of Columbia University Medical Center and the New York State Psychiatric Institute examined data collected during 13,000 office visits to U.S. psychiatrists between 1996 and 2006. They found that antidepressants were the most commonly prescribed medications. Prescribing antidepressants with another antidepressant, a sedative or a mood stabilizer were the three most common psychotropic combinations. The study, published in the *Archives of General Psychiatry*, found women between the ages of 45 and 64 who were insured were the most likely to get two or more prescriptions. ([Reuters](#), 1/06/10)

Latest Research

Reliving School Traumas May Hurt More Than Help: A psychological "debriefing" that involves reliving or remembering trauma may do more harm than good, a research paper asserts. The commentary, which appears in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, adds to a growing consensus in the medical community that forcing these interventions on grieving students could aggravate their stress. Recent studies mentioned in the paper show the approach neither prevents the disorder nor reduces anxiety. In fact, some analyses show that those who had the intervention showed stronger signs of psychological distress than those who didn't partake in it. ([Medpage Today](#), 1/06/10)

Mild Depression May Not Respond to Medication: People who have mild cases of depression may not respond to antidepressants, a new study asserts. Researchers examined 2,164 clinical trials of antidepressants, but included only six in their analysis. The study, which appears in *Journal of the American Medical Association*, found that, on average, the benefits of antidepressants over a placebo were "minimal or nonexistent" in people whose depression was less than "very severe"

according to American Psychiatric Association guidelines. And even people with "severe" depression—which is one step below "very severe"—did not experience a significant effect from antidepressants compared to a placebo, the study reports. Newer and more potent antidepressants might have produced a different result, according to Dr. David Hellerstein, a research psychiatrist at the New York State Psychiatric Institute in New York City. ([CNN](#), 1/06/10)

Psychotherapy May Work Better For Teenage Girls to Prevent Weight Gain: A psychotherapy program may work better than traditional health classes in preventing teenage girls at risk of obesity from gaining more weight, researchers report. The study, published in the *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, randomly assigned 38 girls to attend a program that focuses on improving interpersonal relationships or standard health education classes. Over a 12-month period, those who took part in the psychotherapy sessions were more likely to stabilize or reduce their body mass index, a measurement of obesity. ([HealthDay News](#), 1/09/10)

Stress on Job May Increase Risk of Diabetes in Women: White, middle-aged women reporting high levels of job stress and little work-related social support appear to be at increased risk for developing type 2 diabetes, according to a new study. Researchers assessed job related stressors over an average of nearly 12 years in 5,895 British civil servants who were initially free of diabetes. During this time 308 workers, 92 of whom were women, developed type 2 diabetes. There was not a similar association between job stress in male workers and diabetes risk. The study, reported in the journal *Diabetes Care*, found that among the entire population, workers who developed diabetes were older, more likely to be employed in low-level jobs, expressed greater stress from life events, weighed more, and had other biological characteristics that put them at heightened risk for diabetes. ([Reuters](#), 1/04/10)

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