

## Depression in Old Age: Symptoms, Causes and Treatments

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### ABSTRACT

Depression is one of the most common mental diseases among older people ( $\geq 65$  years). It in general reflects a range of biological and psychosocial factors and it may be difficult to diagnose in older population as its presentation may differ from that of younger people. The results of previous studies show that depression seen for the first time in old age differs from the depression appearing in early ages in terms of clinical presentation, etiology, response to treatment and prognosis. However, it is unclear whether these differences are a result of age-related physiological changes or if late life depression is a different type of disorder.

Weyerer et al. reported that depressive symptoms seen in elder age are associated with female gender, increasing age, living alone, divorce, low education level, functionality impairment, comorbid physical illness, cognitive impairment, cigarette and alcohol use.

Many age-related physical diseases such as cerebrovascular diseases (inc. brain white matter changes), Parkinson disease, cancer, diabetes mellitus and thyroid diseases play a role in appearance and continuing of depressive symptoms.

The existence of multiple physical diseases in older people, polypharmacy, age-related changes in pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics necessitate many factors to be taken into account before the initiation of antidepressant therapy in this population. Use of pharmacotherapy alone might not be optimal enough in many cases. Psychosocial interventions (including psychotherapy) applied together with antidepressants may increase the compliance to treatment and accelerate remission.