Mental Health Comorbidities

Objectives

- Describe types of comorbidities associated with mental health issues.
Disability

- Mental health issues can present a substantial disability in a person’s life.

- Degree of ability may vary over time and life domains.

Disability in terms of mental illness includes:

- Basic activity of daily life

- Interpersonal relations

- Occupational functioning
Mental Health Issues Represent the Greatest Burden of Disability

- Digestive Diseases: 3.31
- Musculoskeletal Diseases: 3.84
- Respiratory Diseases: 6.57
- Sense Organ Disorders: 6.61
- Unintentional Injuries: 6.69
- Malignant Neoplasms: 12.57
- Cardiovascular Diseases: 13.94
- Neuropsychiatric Disorders: 28.47

Co-Morbidities

- **68%** of people with mental illness report having at least 1 general medical disorder.
  - Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease, Pulmonary Disease

- Common treatments for mental illnesses may even worsen co-morbid illness.

- People with mental illness are **2-4x** more likely to die prematurely.
  - The bulk of these deaths are due to “natural causes”
Co-Morbidities

- Mental illness can lead to drug and alcohol abuse as a form of “self-medication”

- People treated with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder are:
  - 12 and 20 times more likely to be treated for alcohol abuse
  - 35 and 42 times more likely to be treated for drug abuse

- Substance abuse disorders are co-morbid in people with depression (20%) and anxiety (15%)

- They are more 2-3x more likely to smoke

Suicide

- Suicide is the act of intentionally causing one’s own death

- In the US, it is the 10th leading cause of death
  - 7th leading cause for males
  - 15th leading cause for females

- Highest rates among young adults (20-24 years)

- 87% of persons committing suicide were diagnosed with a mental illness
Trends in Suicide Rates* Among Females, by Age Group, United States, 1991–2009

Prevalence of Suicidality Among U.S. Adults by Sex and Age in 2008

Data courtesy of SAMHSA
Suicide Prevention

- **The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**
  - 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
  - Free, 24-hour hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress

Class Wrap-Up

- **Key Words:**
  - Disability, Self-Medication, Suicide
- **Individual Importance:**
  - Mental health issues are correlated with disability in daily life and other co-morbidities
- **Public Health Importance:**
  - Mental health issues are highly prevalent, but are poorly screened
- **Socio/Economic Importance:**
  - Mental Health issues are highly stigmatized in our society, leading to decreased health service seeking