

More than the blues

Continued from Page 5

tion. All of us feel this way sometimes, but in a few days, perhaps after talking to a good friend, we start to feel ourselves again.

Unlike the blues, clinical depression persists and doesn't go away no matter how hard the individual wants it to. Clinical depression is not a weakness. It is an illness and can last for months or years if left untreated. The most serious and tragic consequence of clinical depression is suicide.

A health professional diagnoses depression after taking a thorough medical and psychiatric history. The medical examination will determine whether or not the symptoms the individual is experiencing are caused by an illness other than depression.

The psychiatric evaluation will review the individual's symptoms, current life stressors and situation, treatment history, history of mental illness individual's family and assess the person's thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

Who gets depression?

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, more than 17 million Americans each year develop depression. Recent research indicates the number may be even higher, closer to 20 million.

One thing on which researchers agree is that less than half of the people suffering from depression actually receive treatment.

Yet, one out of every five adults may experience a depression at some point in their lives. Twice as many women as men suffer from depression, although everybody,

including children, can develop the illness.

What are the treatments for depression?

More than 80 percent of people with depression improve with treatment by the end of one year. There are two principal treatments for depression — medication and psychotherapy.

For some, just one or the other is sufficient. For others, the most effective treatment is a combination of the two. Some people are helped by electroconvulsive therapy or self-help groups.

■ Antidepressant medication works by affecting brain chemistry. The medications are not addictive and may take several weeks to be effective.

■ Psychotherapy, sometimes called talking therapy, comes in many forms. Generally, the therapy is aimed at helping the person develop new ways of thinking, deal with people better, or resolve conflicts remaining from childhood.

■ Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), contrary to popular mythology, is a safe and effective form of treatment. It is generally

used for individuals with severe depression and for patients who cannot tolerate medication because of a medical condition or are at immediate risk for suicide.

■ Self-help groups can provide a supportive environment for an individual with depression, his or her family, and friends. The National Depressive and Manic Depressive Association, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, and some local hospitals offer support groups.

People with depression need treatment in order to function fully and modulate the chance of recurrence. Treatment is highly effective. With appropriate treatment, many people can experience improvement in as little as eight weeks.

In addition, the costs to not getting treatment are very high. People can lose their jobs, destroy relationships, and isolate themselves from their communities. Physical and mental health suffer as well.

Depression is also costly to society. Studies indicate that the cost of clinical depression exceeds \$47.3 billion annually. Fully \$24 billion is comprised of lost productivity and worker absenteeism on the job.

Five killed in rooming house fire

MOUNT MORRIS TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — A fire broke out at an unlicensed rooming house for the elderly before dawn yesterday, killing five people.

Six people were hospitalized, one in critical condition. The others were in fair condition.

Mount Township Fire Chief

Benny Zappa said it appears that the fire started in a bedroom of the home, where 12 senior citizens and the building manager lived.

"They got three people in one bedroom. It's unreal," he said. "I don't know if they had fire drills. They shouldn't have to operate that way."