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Depression

Introduction

Depression is a serious mental health condition which can have a significant impact throughout an individual's everyday life, affecting their ability to manage day to day activities, including their emotional wellbeing, physical health and psychological well-being. Although depression is often associated with low mood, it varies between individuals and can be more than feelings of sadness, involving a vast range of symptoms which can influence behaviour, cognitive thoughts and relationships. This mental health condition can affect people of all ages and can impact the people around them, which makes it an important issue recognised within health and social care services. Global and UK statistics highlight the widespread nature and severity of this condition as a significant public health concern. Identifying signs of depression at an early stage and providing appropriate care and support can help individuals manage their symptoms and enhance their quality of life. This assignment will explore depression, including its symptoms, causes and effects, as well as examine the importance of appropriate support and treatment through professional intervention for individuals suffering from depression.

Different approaches used to measure and monitor Depression

A few approaches are used by health and social care services to monitor and measure depression. Professionals perform assessments which primarily involve discussing an individual's thoughts and feelings, any symptoms they may be experiencing and how these are impacting their day-to-day life. They may also consider the duration and severity of symptoms, any historic mental health difficulties and any risks the individual may pose to themselves or others, including self-harm and suicidal thoughts. Research by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2025) suggests that depression can involve prolonged low mood or loss of interest or pleasure, alongside symptoms such as tiredness, low energy, changes in appetite or weight, poor concentration and low self-esteem and self-worth.

Measuring the severity of depression includes professionals using the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9). This questionnaire contains nine specific questions in relation to the symptoms of depression. Individuals completing the questionnaire will provide ratings based on the frequency of symptoms, helping professionals to assess the intensity of symptoms and monitor any improvements or changes. NICE recommends the use of depression questionnaires as a measure validated for use in primary care such as the PHQ-9 to help monitor changes in an individual's symptoms over time (NICE, 2025). During treatment, professionals will repeat the assessment to help determine whether an intervention is effective and whether the individual would benefit from additional or alternative support.

Monitoring depression relies on regular reviews of a person's response to treatment. This includes reviewing changes in medication, symptoms, any side effects experienced, therapy engagement and any changes to a person's overall functioning. NICE recommends examining how well the individual is responding to treatment and monitoring suicidal thoughts, specifically during the early stages of treatment (NICE, 2022). Combining both

professional assessment with standard questionnaires enables depression to be monitored overtime instead of depending on a one-off assessment.

How depression is controlled

A combination of approaches can be used for management and control of depression, including social, psychological and pharmacological interventions, dependent on the severity of the individual's condition, symptoms and personal circumstances. NICE suggests matching treatment to the needs and preferences of the individual and using the least intrusive yet effective treatment where appropriate (NICE,2022). Individuals experiencing less severe or mild depression may be managed through psychological support, this could include guided self-help, physical activity or cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), these approaches help the individual to recognise negative thinking and behaviour and support the development of healthier coping strategies for managing mental health difficulties. The NHS (2026) states that talking therapies such as CBT is a recommended treatment to support many mental health problems, including depression.

Additionally, antidepressant medication could possibly be recommended for moderate to severe depression. A commonly prescribed antidepressant is selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). This medication could potentially be combined with talking therapy in certain circumstances. Individuals with severe depression can be referred to specialist mental health teams where necessary, these include psychiatrists, psychologists, specialist nurses and occupational therapists.

Lifestyle and social approaches can also have a positive impact on managing mental health. Maintenance of physical activity, healthy sleep patterns, a healthy balanced diet and social interactions may support overall emotional wellbeing. Another approach is encouraging individuals to develop coping strategies and learn to recognise early warning signs of mental health decline and symptoms returning to prevent relapse. Professionals can help to develop a management plan for a clearer understanding of what support is accessible should a person's symptoms return or become unmanageable. Therefore, early recognition, ongoing monitoring and access to appropriate treatment support the prevention of symptoms becoming more severe.

Consequences of depression on people in the community

Depression can cause significant consequences for individuals, their loved ones and the wider community. Having this mental health condition can have a negative effect on the day-to-day life of the individual, impacting their relationships, " Depression is different from regular mood changes and feelings about everyday life. It can affect all aspects of life, including relationships with family, friends and community. It can result from or lead to problems at school and at work." (WHO, 2025).

People who are experiencing a depressive episode may withdraw from social activities or interactions, this could be because of low mood/ sadness, fatigue, a loss of interest or negative feelings towards self-worth. Individuals may isolate themselves, thus also reducing their support network. Relationships with family and friends may suffer and can become

increasingly difficult when the individual fails to communicate their needs and how they are feeling, or no longer wants to be involved in activities they previously engaged in.

More severe symptoms create significant consequences, which could potentially make it difficult for individuals suffering from mental health to remain in employment or education, which could lead to financial difficulties and create chronic stress, contributing to worsening symptoms. This could further impact families and carers supporting the individual suffering with severe depression and create an emotional strain on their wellbeing.

In the most severe cases, depression can result in an individual inflicting self-harm or having suicidal thoughts. Mental Health UK (2026), suggests that those with a mental health condition such as depression, are at greater risk of suicide. This demonstrates that depression should not be overlooked and viewed as a temporary sadness, as if depression is left untreated, it can create serious consequences for the individual and the surrounding community. Providing access to early support and reducing stigma can encourage individuals to seek the necessary help and get treatment before their condition worsens.

Health and social care support services required within the community

Individuals who suffer from depression may require various health and social care support services within their community to help manage and improve their ongoing symptoms and support their wellbeing. Health and social care support should be person-centred and based on an individual's specific needs and level of risk. A first point of contact can be provided by General Practitioners (GPs) and can be managed by assessment of symptoms, monitoring any changes in an individual's mental health and identifying suitable treatment options. These can include prescribing medications such as SSRIs, psychological therapy referral or further review by specialist mental health services.

Additional support can be provided for those experiencing more severe or complex mental health difficulties, through community mental health services. These services may include social workers, mental health nurses, occupational therapists and many other professionals who can work collaboratively to maintain support for recovery. This support could involve regular assessments, monitoring of medication, care plans and helping individuals keep independence with everyday activities within their community. Furthermore, psychologists and psychiatrists can provide more intensive treatment and monitor individuals who may be at greater risk of self-harm and suicidal thoughts. NICE (2022) recommends assessing an individual's suicide risk and considering their social support system when identifying the level of care needed.

NHS Talking Therapies are another significant community-based service. Individuals within England can self-refer themselves for support relating to their depression without consulting a GP first. " Around one in five people suffer from anxiety or depression every year, and talking therapies provide people with support and treatment to overcome these difficulties." (Hazell, Vincent, 2024). These services can provide treatments such as counselling, guided self-help and CBT. Appointments for these services are accessible to the public in different formats, including face-to-face, online via website or apps and via telephone, ensuring availability to all individuals in the community to use their preferred method of service and

avoid missed opportunities for support if an individual may find traditional appointments difficult.

Social care also plays a vital role, especially when depression is interfering with an individual's ability to manage daily life. Social workers can support people to access appropriate services, maintain independence and help with practical support. Voluntary organisations and community support groups help reduce social isolation by establishing opportunities for like-minded individuals to communicate through shared experience.

Overall cooperation between all health and social care professionals is needed to provide effective support to the community, particularly those experiencing mental health issues. Person-centred approaches are pivotal to individuals as those suffering with depression may experience different aspects of their mental health from another, and may require different combinations of medication, treatment and practical support. Providing early intervention and continued monitoring through accessible services can support individuals in managing their depression and enhance overall well-being.

Conclusion

To conclude, depression is an important mental health condition and affects many individuals, affecting emotional wellbeing, physical health, relationships and day to day life. Measuring and monitoring symptoms using professional assessment methods such as the PHQ-9 questionnaire can help to examine the severity of depression and evaluate whether treatment is necessary or effective. Various approaches, including talking therapies, lifestyle changes and medication can be used to support management of this condition. Depression can impact families and wider communities, thus the significance of available and easily accessible health and social care services. Intervention at early stages, appropriate treatment and ongoing healthcare support can help individuals to manage their symptoms regardless of severity and improve their daily living.

References

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