

Depressed seniors use alternative medicine

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U.S. researchers say people over 65 who are depressed or anxious use complementary or alternative medicine more often than other seniors.

Associate Professor Joseph Grzywacz and colleagues at Wake Forest University School of Medicine found 34.9 percent of people over 65 who had symptoms of anxiety or depression used complementary or alternative medicine, or CAM, compared with 26.5 percent of those without such mental symptoms.

When praying for health is considered a form of CAM, the percentage jumps to 81.7 percent of those with mental symptoms and 64.6 percent of those without.

But the results surprisingly showed fewer than 20 percent of those with anxiety or depression used CAM to treat it, the scientists said.

"Based on previous research and models of health self management, it was anticipated that CAM use would be greater among older adults with self-reported anxiety or depression than those without such conditions," said Grzywacz.

Grzywacz said mental disorders among older adults are under-diagnosed and under-treated because many believe depressive feelings are a natural part of aging and are not something requiring treatment.

The study is reported in the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine.

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