

Getting help for depression and anxiety has significant long-term benefits

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University of Alberta researcher Ian Colman and his team performed a study to see the long term effects of taking antidepressants or anti-anxiety medications. They found people who were not using antidepressants or anti-anxiety medications were three times more likely to be suffering from depression or anxiety 10 years later.

According to the Mood Disorder Society of Canada, about 1.3 million Canadians suffer from depression.

University of Alberta researcher Ian Colman says most people are not getting the type of treatment they need.

Colman, an assistant professor from the School of Public Health, and his research team decided to perform a study to see the long term effects of taking antidepressants or anti-anxiety medications.

The team studied a group of 200 people who were diagnosed with either depression or anxiety. Of that group, 45 were on medication.

The group of 200 had their mental health assessed in 1989 through a series of questions in a survey asking about their illness and what, if any, treatments they were on. Ten years later the group took a similar questionnaire.

Colman says they were surprised to find those who were not using antidepressants or anti-anxiety medications were three times more likely

to be suffering from depression or anxiety 10 years later.

"This is a significant find," said Colman. "What this tells us is that, if people get treated initially, they are less likely to have a relapse in the future. This could be a significant benefit, not only for the patient but also for the health-care system as it's estimated the economic costs in Canada associated with depression are \$14 billion per year."

Colman says depression and anxiety have a stigma attached to them and that people are often afraid to admit they have a mental disorder. But he hopes this new information will help people realize the long-term benefits of getting help right away.

Source: University of Alberta

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