

Half of depressed Americans go untreated, study finds

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A national survey of 15,762 households by UCLA/Wayne State University researchers found that only 21 percent of Americans suffering from clinical depression receive medical care consistent with American Psychiatric Association guidelines. Half receive no treatment at all.

The majority of treated patients, nearly 45 percent, received [psychotherapy](#) with no medication. Only 34 percent of patients were prescribed [antidepressants](#). Of that number, Mexican Americans and African Americans were prescribed antidepressants a third less often than Caucasians. Factors such as education, health insurance and income did not explain the lower rates of medication use.

African Americans and Mexican Americans faced the greatest barriers to mental healthcare and received adequate treatment only half as often as Caucasians. Depression is the leading cause of disability in the United States.

The findings unmasked disparities in healthcare access often overlooked when Latinos are inappropriately lumped together. This was especially true for Mexican Americans, who showed the greatest inequalities in [mental health](#) care. Lack of health insurance partly explained the disparity for Mexican Americans, but not for African Americans' low levels of treatment, suggesting other variables are at play.

More information: The Archives of General Psychiatry publishes the

findings in its January 2010 edition. Citation: Arch Gen Psychiatry. 2010;67[1]:37-46.

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