

Low education, income levels linked to depression among urban black fathers

November 23 2010

(PhysOrg.com) -- A new University of Michigan study finds that black fathers are 50 percent more likely to be depressed than men in the general population. One quarter of black fathers were depressed at some time over the five-year course of the study.

Additionally, black fathers with lower levels of education and income have elevated rates of depression. Depression is twice as prevalent among those without a high school education.

These findings are surprising because depression is more often linked to women and mothers, rather than men and fathers.

"The results are also troubling, given current [economic conditions](#)," said Marilyn Sinkewicz, assistant professor at the U-M School of Social Work.

[Black men](#) are disproportionately exposed to adverse social and economic factors that are linked to depression. The study highlights the need for policies that target education, job training, child support and criminal justice issues among black fathers, as well as policies that also consider the [mental health](#) of these men.

Sinkewicz studies the health and mental health of men and boys, and the spillover effects on their families. She co-authored the study, which appears in the current issue of Research on Social Work Practice, with Rufina Lee of New York State Psychiatric Institute.

The researchers used data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, which followed 3,710 children born to unmarried parents and 1,188 children born to married parents. Parents were recruited from 75 hospitals in 20 major cities in the late 1990s.

Fathers and mothers were interviewed immediately after the birth of their child. Follow-up interviews occurred when the child was 1, 3 and 5 years old. The study is ongoing.

On the whole, conditions among black fathers worsened over the course of the study. The proportion that remained free of depression and the proportion that recovered from depression decreased at each follow up interview.

Seventy five percent of black fathers were free from depression, anxiety, substance dependence, and bad health. These problems were highly concentrated in fathers with depression. Co-occurring conditions such as these are more chronic and difficult to treat.

Fathers with [depression](#) and those with multiple health and mental health problems were also more likely to have looser bonds with the mothers of their children, even though these fathers start out with high hopes for family life. This study suggests that fulfilling these dreams requires a focus on the mental health of fathers.

Provided by University of Michigan

Citation: Low education, income levels linked to depression among urban black fathers (2010, November 23) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-11-income-linked-depression-urban-black.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.