

Depressing future for men? Shift in employment balance between spouses a factor

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Emory University experts predict that rates of depressive disorders among men will increase as the 21st century progresses.

In an editorial published in the March, 2011 issue of the [British Journal of Psychiatry](#), author Boadie Dunlop, MD, writes "Compared to women, many men attach a great importance to their roles as providers and protectors of their families. Failure to fulfill the role of breadwinner is associated with greater depression and [marital conflict](#)."

Research shows that since the beginning of the recession in 2007, roughly 75 percent of the jobs lost in the United States were held by men. On the other hand, women are increasingly becoming the primary household earners with 22 percent of wives earning more than their husbands in 2007, versus only four percent in 1970. Unfortunately, there is little reason for anyone to believe that traditional male jobs will return in significant numbers with economic recovery.

Additionally, biological and sociological differences in men and women may make it harder for men to fit into the role of primary care provider to young children than most women.

"Men in the changing economy will face the same risks for depression that women faced in older economies: trapped in a family role from which they cannot escape because of an inability to find employment," Dunlop says.

Finally, the societal expectancy of men to be tough, stoic and hide their feelings is being significantly eroded. The growing awareness about mental health through education, and hearing prominent male figures talk about their depression, has had a significant impact in opening up the public space for men to validate symptoms of depression.

One of the most well established findings in the epidemiology of [psychiatric disorders](#) is that women have nearly twice the lifetime risk of developing major [depressive disorder](#) than men.

"The changing socioeconomic positions of the West could lead to prevalence in the rates of depression in [men](#) increasing, while rates in [women](#) decrease," warns Dunlop. "Practitioners need to be aware of these forces of life, and be prepared to explore with their patients the meaning of these changes and interventions that might be helpful."

More information: <http://bjp.rcpsych.org/>

Provided by Emory University

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