

Many Americans suffering in final year of life

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(HealthDay)—For a growing number of Americans, the final year of life is marked by pain, depression, and other distressing symptoms, according to a study published in the Feb. 3 issue of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

The findings are based on a periodic health survey of older Americans. Between 1998 and 2010, 7,204 study participants died, and their family members were asked about symptoms their loved one had suffered in the last year of life.

Researchers found that between 1998 and 2010, the number of Americans who suffered pain in their last year of life rose from 54.3 to 60.8 percent. Meanwhile, the prevalence of depression rose from 45.0 to

57.0 percent, while other symptoms—such as breathlessness, confusion, severe fatigue, and incontinence—either increased or did not improve.

"These findings are troubling," senior researcher Karl Lorenz, M.D., of the Pardee RAND Graduate School and the University of California, Los Angeles, told *HealthDay*. The increase in end-of-life symptoms, Lorenz said, has occurred despite national efforts to improve [end-of-life care](#), dating back to the 1990s. Those efforts have made a difference. The number of Americans in hospice care doubled between 2000 and 2009, the researchers noted. But often [hospice care](#) isn't offered until the last few weeks or days of life, Lorenz said. "It's often 'tacked on' to more-intensive care," he said.

More information: [Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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