CIHI presents Series on Seniors to bring together and profile data and reports from different CIHI areas, on topics related to seniors’ health. Seniors in this series are defined as persons age 65 and older.

Series on Seniors

Seniors and Mental Health

Residential Care: Focus on Depression

Based on a sample of nearly 50,000 seniors living in residential care facilities (long-term care, nursing or personal care homes) in five Canadian jurisdictions, we know the following:

• Nearly half (44%) had a diagnosis and/or symptoms of depression.
• Eighteen percent of the total sample had symptoms of depression with no documented diagnosis. These seniors were less likely to receive specialized assessment and treatment.
• Those diagnosed with depression were much more likely to receive antidepressant medications—twice as likely, compared to those with symptoms only and lacking diagnoses.
• Whether diagnosed or undiagnosed, seniors with symptoms of depression were more likely to experience significant medical, social, functional and quality-of-life challenges.

Figure 1: Distribution of Depression Diagnoses and Symptoms in Residential Care Seniors, 2008–2009

- 17% No Symptoms, With Diagnosis
- 18% No Symptoms, No Diagnosis
- 9% With Symptoms, With Diagnosis
- 56% With Symptoms, No Diagnosis

Source
Continuing Care Reporting System, Canadian Institute for Health Information.
Hospitalizations Related to Mental Health

- In 2005–2006, there were 32,196 hospitalizations for a mental illness among seniors in acute care settings in Canada.
- Organic disorders—those defined by a detectable physiological change in an organ, usually the brain—such as Alzheimer’s made up roughly half (51%) of the mental illness diagnoses among hospitalized seniors.
- The second most common mental illness diagnoses were mood disorders, such as depression (22%), followed by schizophrenic and psychotic disorders (9%).
- Hospital stays for mental illness are much longer for seniors than for other age groups. In 2005–2006, seniors were hospitalized for 29 days on average, compared to 16 days for those age 45 to 64.
- Just fewer than one-quarter (23%) of hospitalized seniors were also concurrently diagnosed with drug- or alcohol-related disorders.

Figure 2: Mental Health Diagnoses Among Hospitalized Seniors, 2005–2006

### Bibliography

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### Need more information?

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