

## Depression, Social Isolation, and ACOLOG

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PEC  
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## A Brief Look at Depression and People with Disabilities

*I feel sad all the time and have difficulty concentrating and making simple decisions. I've even lost my appetite, have little energy, and am sleeping a lot. Sometimes I feel so hopeless that I think of killing myself.*



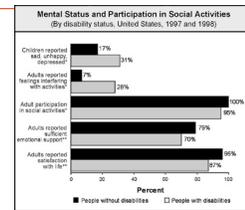
## Causes of Depression



- Not caused by a single factor.
- Contributing factors may include:
  - Biological, such as genetic or associated with physical illness
  - Psychological, such as abuse or bereavement
  - Social, such as relationship problems, loss of a job, poverty or boredom

## Research on Depression

- General population
  - Combination of cognitive behavioral counseling and medication provides the best symptom relief
- People with disabilities
  - Little research on depression among people with disabilities
  - Only one study on depression among people with complex communication needs



Sources: \*CDC, NCHS, National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), 1997  
 \*\*CDC, NCDOPH, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 1998

## What do we Know about People with CCN and Depression?

- **Research**
  - clear relationship between depression and loneliness
  - older adults who feel lonely are at high risk for depression



## Research

- **CNN and loneliness**
  - (Ballin and Balandin 2007)
  - 2 themes
    - Communication and social networks
    - most related to loneliness



## Personal Perspectives

Robert Segalman, PhD



Yoosun Chung, PhD



## Yoosun Chung



## Who am I & What do I do?

### For my professional life

- A Research Assistant Professor at Helen Kellar Institute for Human Disabilities at George Mason University
  - Originally came from South Korea. After graduation from high school in Korea, I came to America to study abroad.
  - Earned a doctoral degree in Assistive Technology in May, 2004
  - Teach GMU courses using my communication device
    - EDSE 517, Computer Application for Special Population
    - EDIT/EDSE 529, Internet as an Assistive Technology Tool
  - Involved several projects

### For my personal life

- Mother of two children (11 year-old-son and 7 year-old-daughter)
- Trying to being a good wife

I am one of the luckiest people in the world.  
Despite all these wonderful things, I am depressed from time to time.

## When I feel strong depression

- I become an unmotivated person.
- During my depression mode,
  - I can't concentrate on my work
  - I avoid meeting people in public
  - I do not want to call even my mother or my best friend

## My depression mainly stems from?

- Lack of social interaction with my colleagues/co-workers (I feel as if I am an outsider)
- Speech difficulty itself
- Continuous muscle pain
- People's attitudes

## What do I do during my depressive moment?

- Seek a regular conversation partner at work
- Try to sleep more than usual
- Try Valium for reducing my muscle pain

## Robert Segalman



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## ACOLUG

- 15 years
- 700 subscribers
- International listserv
  - Shared information
  - Formed social networks
  - Provided assistance to each other
  - Mentored parents and students
  - Provided emotional support



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## ACOLUG Subscribers Discuss Depression

- 130 postings on depression, including those focusing on

### Personal disclosures:

- Personally going through long-term depression;
- During depression, I didn't do very much;
- \_\_\_ is battling depression and is about to do himself in;
- I have depression myself and considered taking my life;
- Not being able to do anything for myself makes me want to die;
- \_\_\_ has history of depressions and hurting myself;
- Even though I have a smile on my face everyday does not mean I don't get lonely and depressed.



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### General Thoughts and Suggestions:

- Website and online support groups are helpful;
- There's a lot of information out there with a mixture of information and misinformation;
- Loss or lack of a job leads to loss of self-esteem leading to depression;
- Too often issues like depression are 'swept under the rug';
- Parents have no idea that their son or daughter suffers from depression and loneliness, and therefore they do not know what to do about it;



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## ACOLUG Subscribers Discuss Depression

- 130 postings on depression, including those focusing on *More general thoughts and suggestions:*
  - Keep trying medication and seek help;
  - Having good nutrition, exercise, good sleep, and lots of friends helps;
  - Depression is especially true for people with significant disabilities;
  - ...should all have personal depression prevention plans;
  - Important to realize you aren't alone when dealing with depression;
  - I believe this is an issue that needs to be addressed...

## Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)



- Can reduce social isolation and loneliness
- Can provide a platform for counseling & social/emotional support
- Internet transcends time and space
  - Reducing the need for
    - Traveling long distances
    - Inaccessible barriers
  - Slow rate of communication no longer significant barrier
- Access to Information (and misinformation)

## Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

- Establish, sustain, & expand social networks
- Reduce social isolation
  - Facebook
  - MYSpace
  - ACOLUG



## Depression

- Painful, but there is hope!
  - Evidence-based treatments
  - ICT --> information, services, & supports
- Most combat stigma



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