

Depression Not a Normal Part of Aging

HOUSTON - (March 8, 1999) - Depression is not a natural part of growing old but rather a medical condition that should be treated aggressively.

"Depression in the elderly, or in anyone, should not be thought of as normal," said Dr. Victor Molinari, a Baylor College of Medicine psychologist and director of geropsychology at the Houston Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC). "Some groups are at higher risk, but the average older person is not depressed any more than a young person."

In general, only about three percent of the elderly living independently in the community will experience depression. That figure increases to around 20 to 30 percent of persons in nursing homes or with chronic illnesses like emphysema, heart disease or diabetes.

"Two personality types are also at

higher risk - obsessive/compulsive persons bothered by their lack of control over changes related to aging and dependent persons who lose the loved ones they rely on," Molinari said.

"Depression is often not diagnosed because of stereotypes that family, caregivers or even physicians have that the elderly are depressed in general," said Dr. Mark Kunik, a Baylor psychiatrist and director of geropsychiatry at the Houston VAMC.

The elderly often mask their depression by packaging the problem in a physical complaint, so diagnosis can take longer.

Typical signs of depression include: Sleep problems - too little, too much or early rising.

Decreased pleasure in previously enjoyed activities.

Decreased energy concentration
Appetite increases or decreases.
Feeling of hopelessness or

helplessness.

Thoughts of death or suicide.

"In diagnosing, we look for persons experiencing several symptoms for weeks at a time," Kunik said. "Medication, psychotherapy or a combination of both can be effective. The newer anti-depressant medications have favorable benefits and fewer side effects such as dry mouth, constipation, light-headedness and heart problems."

Both experts encourage older persons to practice depression prevention by staying active and being connected to other people through family, community activities, senior groups or church.

"If you notice signs of depression in yourself, a friend or family member, don't wait until it becomes severe," Molinari said. "Talk to the person with depression and their physician, and seek treatment from a mental health professional."

Training Program

WHO: Dr. Kathryn N. Healey, Associate Professor of Graduate Clinical Psychology, Widener University, Chester, PA; Principal, Prosocial Alternatives, a private training/consulting group Swarthmore, PA.

WHAT: Training Event entitled: Pathways to Peace ICPS-PROSOCIAL PROBLEM SOLVING

WHERE: Bethel A.M.E. Church 5828 NE 8th Avenue Portland, OR 97211

WHEN: Saturday, 13 March 1999 8:00am Registration at the door

WE BEGIN ON TIME!
8:30am - 10:am Morning Mini-Workshop

Suggested Donations: \$5-\$10.00
8:30am - 4:00pm Training Intensive \$40.00 the entire day

WHY: Sponsored by PEACEPLACE as part of our mission to teach children prodocial, peaceful alternatives to violence by developing their skills in generating alternatives and evaluating consequences. (Enclosed information sheet expands the why.)

Foundation Seeks Nominations For Community Service Award

The Oregon Community Foundation is requesting nominations for the George A Russell Community Service Award. This \$2,000 award is given to an individual who has performed exceptionally useful and effective service on a voluntary basis.

The Award was established in 1978 by the friends of George Russell, a Portland attorney who, as a volunteer, was active in civic affairs and city and state politics. Russell was chairman of Citizens for Good Government and the Citizens Solid Waste Committee.

The Oregon Community Foundation is seeking nominees from the greater Portland area who demonstrate leadership, vision and initiative as well as service. Candidates for public office and holders of public office are not eligible, nor are awards made posthumously.

Nomination forms for the George A Russell award are available through The Oregon Community Foundation at 621 SW Morrison Street, Suite 725, Portland, Oregon, 97205. The deadline for nominations is 5:00 p.m., April 16, 1999.

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New Party Victory in MESD Race PCC candidate suffers defeat

Geri Washington, New Party candidate for the Multnomah Education Service District board, was elected Tuesday to a four year term by the North and Northeast Portland voters. "The 12-year incumbent may have had support of the old guard, but we had the power of organized people," said New Party leader Maceo Pettis.

Another New Party member, Ed Dennis was defeated in his challenge to the three-term incumbent in the Portland Community College zone 7 race (Washington County)

Geri Washington overcame the disadvantages of being the challenger, with a cadre of almost 200 volunteers, who had distributed over 10,000 pieces of literature and contacted thousands of voters by

phone, while sporting homemade car signs and cruising Northeast neighborhoods with a sound-truck.

The incumbent, while securing the endorsement of the MESD superintendent, the MESD employees union, the teachers union and major newspapers, did not directly contact voters according to New Party sources. "Voters were only hearing from Geri Washington," said campaign manager, Jamie Partridge.

Defeated board member, Judy Chambers told the Oregonian that Washington should "Knuckle under" and learns all aspects of the board without undue influence from her backers, the New Party and the Rainbow Coalition. Washington responded, in an election night speech to her supporters, that her

victory for a new movement to bring all the left out parents and students to the decision making table.

An African American community activist, Washington has pledged to provide a fresh perspective to the ESD board. "I will give a voice to parents and students who are left behind by our schools," says Washington. "As a single mother of three children, I know the struggles of working parents," Geri Washington's campaign focussed on stopping neighborhood school closures, keeping children in school and ensuring that all students succeed.

Ed Dennis, NP-supported candidate for PCC Board, was unable to overcome the odds against challenging an entrenched conservative in a Republican

dominated district. Dennis, director of the Oregon Student Association, gained 40% of the vote to 49% for the incumbent in a three-way race. He relied on a base among college students, with over 100 volunteers phoning over 5,000 voters. Promoting accessible and affordable college education, Dennis gained the support of the PCC faculty Federation and Governor Kitzhaber. In defeat, Dennis pledged to continue to build progressive organization and political power in western Washington County.

The New Party is a grassroots organization, running candidate and issue campaigns to build independent, progressive political power for labor, community and environmental groups.

Gene Therapy Studied as Complement to Prostate-Cancer Surgery

HOUSTON - (March 8, 1999) - Gene therapy is being tested as a way to improve the success of prostate-cancer surgery in high-risk patients. "Fifty percent of prostate-cancer patients who have only surgery to remove large or aggressive tumors will develop cancer again within five years," said Dr. Dov Kadmon, an urologist at Baylor College of Medicine and The Methodist Hospital in Houston.

Cancer cells that might have spread to other parts of the body escape the surgical knife, allowing the possibility of the cancer to recur. Kadmon is investigating whether gene therapy can help the immune system find and kill these "escapes."

A month before surgery, 25 patients with untreated aggressive prostate cancer will receive a viral gene injected directly into the prostate through the rectal wall. This gene forces the cancer cells to produce

thymidine kinase (TK), an enzyme not present in healthy human cells.

Patients will then receive the drug gancyclovir for two weeks. The drug is harmless to normal humane cells. But in prostate-cancer cells that have produced TK, gancyclovir is converted to a toxic substance that kills them.

"In effect, the prostate-cancer cells commit suicide," said Kadmon, principal investigator for the study.

After the gancyclovir treatment, two weeks in allotted for the body to develop an immunologic response to the prostate-cancer cells before the prostate is removed.

"Cancer cells have very clever ways of evading the immune system," Kadmon said. "By killing the cancer cells in the prostate with gene therapy before the gland is removed, we hope the immune system will begin to recognize these cancer cells as foreign bodies and build its own, any cancer cells left behind should be attacked

by the immune system.

"We hope this approach will increase the number of cures by 30 percent," Kadmon said. He and co-investigator Dr. Brian Miles will continue to monitor patients for more than five years after the surgery for signs of cancer.

This gene-therapy technique, developed by Baylor urology researcher Dr. Timothy Thompson, proved to be safe in a previous study at Baylor.

Kadmon's research is funded by the national Institutes of Health through a Specialized Program of Research Excellence (SPOR) grant for prostate cancer and a grant for the general Clinical Research Center. Funds from Baylor's Scott Department of Urology support out-of-town study participants' temporary housing.

Volunteers for the study should call (713) 798-7893.

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"Today, people depend on dial tone to keep in touch. We're working to make Web tone just as fast, easy and universally available," said Sol Trujillo, president and CEO, US WEST.mail gives people access to a mobile Internet lifestyles, where their e-mail and voice-mail, their company and wireless phones, are all increasingly connected. This is great for customers, whether they're Net-Savvy or 'Net-starters.'

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