Most Stroke Patients With Depression Don’t Receive Mental Health Care

Black and Latino populations particularly lacked access to mental health treatment post-stroke.

August 4, 2022 By Laura Schmidt

Depression is highly prevalent among stroke survivors, affecting about one in three people. What’s more, two-thirds of those showing depression symptoms received no mental health treatment, especially Black and Latino populations, according to a new study from Regenstrief Institute, Indiana University School of Medicine and University of Michigan.

The study, published in Neurology, analyzed data from stroke and non-stroke patients from 2004 to 2017. Researchers found that stroke patients used outpatient mental health services at a steady rate, but the non-stroke group had an increase in depression treatment.

Results also found that older patients, men and survivors who were Black or Latino were all less likely to receive mental health treatment.

“This study shows a very significant number of survivors are not getting the help and support they need after a stroke,” author Linda S. Williams, MD, a Regenstrief research scientist and IU School of Medicine professor of neurology, said in a Regenstrief Institute article. “This rate has remained low over more than a decade, despite societal changes in attitudes toward mental health treatment.”

Williams emphasized the importance of determining what barriers are preventing stroke survivors from care and interventions to address their mental health needs.

“Unmet needs for depression after stroke remain significant and are important because they impact stroke survivors’ quality of life and their recovery,” Williams said. “Critical treatment gaps for vulnerable populations persist, and potential quality of care gaps may have widened between stroke and non-stroke patients.”

To learn more about life after a stroke, read “Where You Live May Affect Your Post-Stroke Recovery” and “Black and Latino People Have Higher Risk for Death After Certain Strokes.”

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