

Millennials' isolation prompts concerns about behavioral health

WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, UNITED STATES, January 27, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Millennials are shaping up to be the loneliest generation in recent American history. That has implications for behavioral health in boys and men, both now and long after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite their facility with social media, Millennials – those born from 1981 to 1996 – express a profound isolation that is remarkable. In a 2018 survey by polling company YouGov.com, 30 percent of Millennial respondents said they felt lonely. They were also more likely than older generations to report that they had no acquaintances (25 percent), no friends (22 percent), no close friends (27 percent) and no best friends (30 percent). You can read the poll results at <https://today.yougov.com/topics/lifestyle/articles-reports/2019/07/30/loneliness-friendship-new-friends-poll-survey>.

Behavioral health issues in boys and men continue to be a significant problem, both for society and in the clinical setting. Male Millennials have been found to have several behavioral and preference characteristics that make their behavioral health challenges unique for communities and clinicians alike.

For example, a 2019 Blue Cross Blue Shield report found that, of the top 10 conditions affecting Millennials, depression is number one, followed by substance abuse disorder and alcohol abuse disorder.

“Drug, alcohol and suicide deaths have risen in nearly every age group over the last decade, but the increase has been especially pronounced for younger Americans. Between 2007 and 2017, drug-related deaths increased by 108 percent among adults ages 18 to 34, while alcohol-related deaths increased by 69 percent and suicides increased by 35 percent,” reported Time magazine in a 2019 report called “More Millennials Are Dying 'Deaths of Despair,' as Overdose and Suicide



Rates Climb.”

The Time piece cited statistics from a Trust for America's Health report, drawn on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data. In total, about 36,000 millennials died “deaths of despair” in 2017, with fatal drug overdoses being the biggest driver, the Trust for America's Health report said.

Trust for America's Health (TFAH) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public health policy, research, and advocacy organization that promotes optimal health for every person and community and makes the prevention of illness and injury a national priority.

The TFAH report also noted that more males die by suicide than females. Between 2008 and 2017, the age-adjusted suicide death rate for Millennials increased from 11.6 per 100,000 to 14 per 100,000. Among males, the increase rose from 19 per 100,000 to 22.4 per 100,000. Among females, the rate increased from 4.8 per 100,000 in 2008 to 6.1 per 100,000 in 2017. Suicides by men typically involve more lethal means – firearms -- than attempts by women, who die by poison or overdose.

Millennials belong to an at-risk generation which seems to have few of the individual social support networks or community connections that have been prevalent in prior generations. The Blue Cross Blue Shield report suggested a myriad of important associated effects from increased reliance on social media for interactions, rather than the in-person interactions more common among previous generations. These include feelings of social isolation and a lack of face-to-face social networks for support. Identification, and possible mitigation, of the potentially disastrous consequences of this lack of support must be explored.

The implications of these findings are of great significance for both clinical care and involvement at the community level. If all of this does not pose enough to be concerned about, add the effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic's emotional impact: additional isolation, an economic downturn and anxiety about the near future during what should be prime earning years. Taken together, the situation creates a perfect storm of factors that need to be considered in working with Millennial males.

The American Psychological Association says that men are significantly less likely to seek treatment for or to talk about mental illness. Additionally, stigma around mental health issues in the African American community may prevent Black men from seeking treatment, says the National Institute for Mental Health.

In a recent Kaiser Family Foundation poll, nearly half of adults in the United States reported that their mental health has been negatively impacted due to worry and stress over COVID-19. This stress manifests itself physically, leading to increased health problems which are already a concern for many African Americans and others living in disadvantaged communities across the country.

A new study, funded by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), will examine the benefits of two types of mindfulness-based stress reduction programming for underserved communities. It will compare the effectiveness of teleconference guidance with a mobile app that provides the same guidance.

The study, to be conducted by Yu-Ping Chang, Ph.D., of The Research Foundation for The State University of New York, will recruit 178 participants, primarily in African American communities in Buffalo, NY. Among its goals is to produce lessons on strategies to personalize and provide culturally appropriate interventions for African American communities. Researchers hope the stress reduction techniques can also benefit other mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, loneliness and isolation, sleep disruption and quality of life among adults who live in predominantly low-income, minority neighborhoods.

Men's Health Network

Men's Health Network (MHN) is an international non-profit organization whose mission is to reach men, boys, and their families where they live, work, play, and pray with health awareness messages and tools, screening programs, educational materials, advocacy opportunities, and patient navigation. Learn more about MHN at www.menshealthnetwork.org and follow them on Twitter @MensHlthNetwork and Facebook at www.facebook.com/menshealthnetwork. Consider donating to MHN at www.menshealthnetwork.org/donate.

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