Depression..A Deadly Disease Essay, Research Paper

” ‘A symptom of the bad times is that you think that they will never abate. You convince yourself that you are doomed forever to a state of half-life. You awake to a sighing gloom and an inordinate effort of will is required to leave your bed. You know that you should get up to arrest the feeling of despair, but the listlessness which is a characteristic of the condition holds you there, gazing upwards in static stare, musing over the endlessness of the day ahead. Everything is an effort and is carried out in slow motion. The smallest task is a weight on you…Minor problems become issues of magnitude. Decisions are deferred and avoided. Simple tasks are shelved. Worst of all is the disintegration of your self-confidence. You fumble in speech and in action. The ringing of a telephone assaults you and you shrink from answering it.’ given by the famous writer W. Styrone, in his book entitled Darkness Visible, providing us with an in-dept description of his own personal experiences when he suffered from depression

Over the course of the year, 17.6 million American adults suffer from a depressive illness. That is 10% of the population. (Pfizer, Dealing) Depression is a whole-body illness, including mind, mood, body, and thoughts. It effects everything from the way you sleep to the way you feel about yourself. It effects how you react and how you see things. Depressive illnesses often interfere with normal functioning and cause pain and suffering not only to those who have the disorder but also to the ones who care about them. Depression can rip apart families and destroy the life of an innocent person. This happens to many people because, unfortunately, they do not recognize that they have a treatable illness, and don’t seek medical help. With many types of depression and numerous causes, an innumerable amount of people suffer from depression, but with the right treatments and support of loved ones and themselves, the victims can be cured. (Pfizer, Unmasking)

There are three major types of depression. The first, called major depression is revealed by a combination of symptoms that interfere with the ability to work, sleep, eat, and enjoy everyday life. Disabling episodes of this disease can occur once, twice, or several times in a lifetime. Next, a less severe type of disease called dysthymia involves long-term symptoms that don’t totally disable a person but does not allow them to totally function at “full-steam”. Lastly, bipolar disorder involves cycles of depression. Mood changes can be dramatic and rapid or gradual. In the depressed cycle, you express symptoms of a depressive disorder. When in the manic stage, mania symptoms occur. It effects thinking, judgement, and social behavior. This can be a chronic reoccurring disease. (Kiev, 71)

Various symptoms make the disease hard to trigger, but there are a few key indications that show depression. These are a lowered mood, loss of energy and interest, a feeling of physical illness or of being tiresome, poor concentration, altered appetite and sleep habits, and a slowing down of physical and mental functions. (Tally, Questions ) Other depression symptoms can include pessimism, guilt, a feeling of worthlessness and hopelessness, weight loss or gain, restlessness, irritability, difficulty in making decisions, loss of skills, and (on a more serious level) thoughts or attempts of suicide. In the mania stage of bipolar disease there are different symptoms. These symptoms include inappropriate elation and irritability, severe insomnia, inappropriate notions, increased talkativeness, racing thoughts, increased sexual desire, and extremely poor judgement. (Tally, Questions)

The exact cause of depression remains unknown. There are many theories to what triggers this disease and why it comes about. The most probable explanation, and the one which the treatment of antidepressant drugs is based on, is that there is an imbalance in certain chemical messengers, called neurotransmitters, in the brain. The neurotransmitters, of which there are about 30, transfer messages between nerve cells in the brain. Some evidence suggests that depression is cause by a deficiency in two neurotransmitters called noadrenaline and serotonin. (Kiev, 37) Although this does not explain everything that is known about depression, it does at least serve as a useful model and is usually referred to as the monoamine hypothesis of depression. Now, if this deficiency causes depression, what triggers it? Some types of depression run in the family, indicating that it can be inherited. Most likely, this is the case with bipolar depression. Studies of families with vulnerability to bipolar disorder indicate that their children will also be vulnerable to the disease. Major depression also seems to occur, generation after generation, in some families. Another study shows that people who have relatives with depression have a one in four chance of developing it themselves compared with a one in 14 chance for the general population. (Author Unknown, Why) So, genetics does play a major role in depression. However people with no family history can also become victims of either bipolar or major depression. Why? Well, according to The Courage to Live by Arnold Kiev, there are many reasons. Stressful situations can cause a downward spiral in mental health. Unemployment, social isolation, severe physical illnesses, and lose of a loved one can encourage depression. Difficult relationships, financial problems, or an unwelcome change in life can also trigger it. While it is important to recognize the role that these triggers can play in the development of depression, it is also important to acknowledge that in some cases, depression strikes completely out of the blue for no apparent reason. This may be more difficult to understand for both sufferer and those who care about him, this type of depression is no less difficult to deal with or worthy of help. Very often, a combination of genetic, psychological, and environmental factors is involved in the outbreak of a depressive disorder. (Pfizer, Dealing)

The first step to getting appropriate care and treatment is a complete psychological evaluation to determine whether or not a depressive illness is responsible for the feelings and what type is responsible. Certain medications and some medical conditions can cause symptoms of depression, and can be mistaken for the illness. Next, the person will go through diagnostic evaluation, which will include questions concerning a complete history of symptoms, family records, thoughts, and any alcohol or drug use. It will also involve a mental status examination to determine if thought patterns or memory have been affected. Lastly, a treatment program will be chosen to help set the person on a road to recovery. (Pfizer, Unmasking)

There are three approaches to treatment which are the use of psychological therapies, the use of antidepressant drugs, and the combination of both. The right choice of treatment depends on a variety of factors, such as severity, symptoms, age, etc. (Baldine, 104) The most common forms of psychotherapy are cognitive behavioral therapy and interpersonal therapy. Cognitive behavioral therapy is a short term structured therapy which aims to help the depressed person replace the negative thoughts and attitudes with more positive thoughts and a realistic view of themselves and the world around them. Interpersonal therapy focuses more on past and present relationships and examines how they affect the patients current functioning. (Tally, Questions) In general, though, these depressive illnesses can not be cured totally without the help of medication. Antidepressants are the medication used to cure the illness. There are three main groups of these antidepressants, which are tricyclics, monoamine oxidase inhibitors, and lithium. Their job is simply to work within the brain to either increase the levels of noradrenaline, serotonin, or both. Once this happens, the person returns to normal and can function responsibly again. (Kiev, 106) In the first two weeks of treatment most antidepressants do not show full affect on all the symptoms associated with the disease. At first there is a noticeable improvement in sleep habits or less feelings of anxiety. Next, come improvements in mood. After that, a slow increase in energy levels and the return of interest in things comes about. In time, all feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and suicide gradually subside. (Author Unknown, Why) Studies show that more than 70 percent of people with depression respond to treatments. (Pfizer, Unmasking) Antidepressants are not habit forming, however, they need to be carefully monitored to see if the person is getting the correct dosage. With some medications, the depressed individual will have to stay away from certain foods. There are other side effects also. Dry mouth, constipation, bladder problems, sexual problems, blurred vision, dizziness, drowsiness, headaches, nausea, nervousness, and agitation may occur. (Pfizer, Dealing) Their side effects, though, are in no way a problem compared to the disease they are curing and can usually be resolved somehow. For instance, dosage reduction, drinking lots of water, or eating certain foods will usually help these. (Pfizer, Unmasking)

There are also other ways to help someone with a disorder such as depression. Since it can make a person feel exhausted and helpless, the person will need help from friends and family. Making them feel useful and being very understanding can lessen the burden of this disease. (Tally, Questions) A depression victim can also help himself. The negative feelings make someone feel like giving up. It is important for the person to realize that those negative views are a part of the depression and typically do not accurately reflect the situation. To help feel a little better, the person should do certain things. He should not set difficult goals or take on a great deal of responsibility. Breaking large tasks into small ones and setting priorities can lessen stress. The person should not expect too much from himself which will decrease feelings of failure when things don’t go as planned. Participating in activities and being around people can make the person feel more useful. Lastly, getting rid of negative thinking all together is a big step, but an important one. A depressed person should never accept negative thinking and always fight it. (Author, Why)

There is a serious problem in the world today. Every 20 in 100 people suffer from some form of depression. Twenty-five percent of the population will suffer from depression in their lifetime. Suicide is the most common cause of death in Indian teenagers and black urban women, and with teenagers, suicide doubled in the past 10 years. (Pfizer, Depression) People need to be more aware of the seriousness of the illness, depression. If more people received the help they needed, there may not be as many suicides. Depression can be cured. There are many treatments such as antidepressants and therapy. A person’s life can be turned around no matter how hopeless it seems it is never worth dying.

” The joy of life is living it and doing things of worth,

In making bright and fruitful all the barren spots of earth.

In facing odds and mastering them and rising from defeat,

And making true what once was false, and what was bitter, sweet.

For only he knows perfectly joy whose little bit of soil

Is richer ground than what it was when he began to toil.”

-(Anonymous recovered depression victim) (Author, Motivational)

As you can see there is hope and there are better times ahead.