



Retirees often battle depression, addictions

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Over the next 10 years, many of the baby boomers like me will begin to retire. If you asked most people what they think retirement will be like, they may tell you it should be a time of happiness and joy in their life as they are now able to do all the things they always dreamed of when they were working. But, is that true?

Most people are happy and active in retirement. Some 61 percent of retirees surveyed in 2000 found retirement transition to be "very satisfying." One third of retirees reported moderate satisfaction and only 7 percent reported that their retirement was not satisfying.

Despite this good news, there may be a longer work history for many of us. Baby boomers are expecting to work longer, perhaps warning of a reversal in the century-long trend toward early retirement. Compared with 1992 in 2004, a substantially larger portion of people in their early to mid-50s expected to work after 65.

If we should be lucky enough to be one of those who retire, there may be some problems that have to be overcome. According to the "Health and Retirement Study: Growing Older in America" conducted by the National Institute on Aging, the prevalence of severe depression for men and women combined is approximately 15 percent within each 10-year age category between ages 55 and 84 and approaches 20 percent for the 85 and older group. For all of the age groups, women consistently are more likely than men to report severe depression.

Amazingly, the one factor that the HRS study found affected depression the most was to stop driving. Stopping

driving is one activity of daily living that appears to be associated with increased depressive symptoms. An analysis of a six-year period of early HRS data showed that older people who stop driving were 1.4 times more likely to experience worsening depressive symptoms than those who continued to drive.

Longer-term restrictions on driving further increased the risk of depressive symptoms. As people begin to lose their independence, depression seems to go up at an alarming rate.

Retirement as well seems to be associated with increased drinking and the formation of addictions, especially alcohol, prescription medications and gambling. In a March article by Kathy Hunt in this newspaper, she talked about the problems associated with addiction.

She wrote, "Unfortunately addictions in the elderly often are overlooked; there seems to be an assumption that their problems are due to their physical health and aging. Of major concern are the multiple medications prescribed. Thirty percent of the elderly take eight or more prescriptions."

The elderly are among the highest growing population in gambling. Studies say that anywhere from 4 to 10 percent of the elderly population will become addicted to gambling. Addictions can become a major concern in retirement

While most of us will enjoy our retirement, it still has its pitfalls that should to be monitored. So, if you begin to show indications of depression or addiction in your retirement, you may want to contact your family doctor or a

mental health professional and talk with them regarding your symptoms.

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