

# Reports on depressive symptoms in older adults with chronic conditions.

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Depression is the most common mental disorder among older adults in the United States and one of the most disabling conditions worldwide. Chronic conditions and related functional limitations are associated with late-life depression, but assessment of depression is complicated by the absence of measures that capture the range of depressive emotions older adults may express. This descriptive, correlational study of 314 older adults with chronic conditions examined three measures to assess depressive symptoms: the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D), the short form of the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D-10), and an Emotional Symptom Checklist (ESC). The measures were correlated with each other and with a number of chronic conditions and functional impairments. Men and women scored similarly on all measures, though correlations between depressive symptoms and negative emotions were stronger for men. About 12% of the older adults exceeded the CES-D criteria for severe depressive symptoms, with the greatest percentage among those aged 75 to 84. The most frequently reported negative emotions were sadness (by women and elders through age 84) and loneliness (by men and elders age 85 and over). The findings suggest the need for multiple assessment strategies to identify older adults at risk for late-life depression.