

## Blue Cross Blue Shield Association Study Shows Surge in Major Depression Diagnoses

- *Major depression rising fastest among adolescents and millennials*
- *Pennsylvania falls along the national average, with women reporting the highest depression diagnosis*
- *Wide variations exist in diagnosis rates between states and cities*

Major depression diagnoses surged, especially among adolescents and millennials, from 2013 through 2016, according to a study of medical claims by the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBSA)'s Health of America Report. The report, based on medical claims data from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Health Index<sup>SM</sup> ([BCBS Health Index<sup>SM</sup>](#)), also shows how major depression diagnoses are linked to other chronic health conditions.

The study finds that:

- Major depression has a diagnosis rate of 4.4 percent for BCBS members. Diagnosis rates rose by 33 percent from 2013 through 2016 and climbed fastest among adolescents (up 63 percent) and millennials (up 47 percent).
- Diagnosis rates vary by as much as 300 percent by state from a high of 6.4 percent in Rhode Island to lows of 2.1 in Hawaii and 3.2 percent in Nevada in 2016. By city, diagnosis rates range more than 400 percent from a high of 6.8 percent in Topeka, Kansas, to lows of 1.5 percent in Laredo, Texas, and 2 percent in McAllen/Edinburg/Mission, Texas.
- Women are diagnosed with major depression at double the rate of men (6 percent and 3 percent, respectively).
- Those diagnosed with major depression are nearly 30 percent less healthy on average than those not diagnosed with major depression, according to the BCBS Health Index measurement. Chronic conditions are strongly linked to major depression, as 85 percent of people who are diagnosed with major depression also have one or more serious chronic health conditions. Nearly 30 percent of these members have four or more other health conditions.
- Those diagnosed with major depression use healthcare services more than those without a depression diagnosis. This results in two times the healthcare spending (about \$10,673 compared to \$4,283).

"Major depression diagnoses are growing quickly, especially for adolescents and millennials," said Trent Haywood, senior vice president and chief medical officer for BCBSA. "The high rates for adolescents and millennials could have a substantial health impact for decades to come. Further education and research is needed to identify methods for both physicians and patients to effectively treat major depression and begin a path to recovery and better overall health."

The report, titled [Major Depression: The Impact on Overall Health](#), is based on medical claims data from the BCBS Health Index, a first-of-its-kind measurement of health for nearly every county in America. It encompasses more than 200 conditions that impact health and identifies those health conditions with the greatest impact on the commercially insured population. The BCBS Health Index is powered by de-identified medical claims data from more than 41 million commercially insured members of BCBS companies. The interactive website allows people to measure the overall health and identify the top 10 conditions that negatively impact health at the state and county levels.

"Major depression is a complex condition that impacts a person's overall health. Effectively treating and managing it is critical to overall wellness," said Dr. Denise Harr, Senior Medical Director, Capital BlueCross. "We encourage our members who are dealing with depression to seek treatment as quickly as possible. If you are dealing with this medical condition, it is also important to maintain treatment, even if you are feeling better. Your doctor will work with you to slowly and safely decrease your medication or therapy."

The report breaks down depression diagnosis rates by state and region. Throughout the central Pennsylvania and Lehigh Valley region, the total depression diagnosis rates are as follows:

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|-------------------------------|------|
| • Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton  | 4.0% |
| • Harrisburg-Lebanon-Carlisle | 4.9% |
| • Lancaster                   | 4.0% |
| • Reading                     | 4.0% |
| • Williamsport                | 4.2% |
| • York                        | 4.3% |

See a more [comprehensive breakdown of the statistics](#), including demographics affected.

This is the twentieth study of the Blue Cross Blue Shield: The Health of America Report® series, a collaboration between BCBSA and Blue Health Intelligence, which uses a market-leading claims database to uncover key trends and insights into health care affordability and access to care.

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