

Depression limits activities of about 10 million in U.S., AMA journal study reveals

CHICAGO (AP) — Depression, which afflicts nearly 10 million Americans, is more commonly disabling than arthritis, ulcers, diabetes or high blood pressure — ailments that are often taken more seriously, a study says.

"We've greatly underestimated up until now how disabling depression is related to other chronic medical conditions," said John E. Ware Jr., principal investigator in a study that questioned 11,242 outpatients in three cities.

Depression proved at least as bad as emphysema or back problems at limiting people in their physical functioning or causing them to stay in bed, said the study, published in Friday's Journal of the American Medical Association.

The only two worse chronic conditions were heart pain and advanced coronary artery disease, in terms of limiting activities such as walking, dressing, bathing, climbing stairs or participating in sports, the study found.

Dr. Gerald Klerman, a depression researcher and psychiatry professor at Cornell University Medical College in New York, said he considers the study important because it shows the real costs of depression.

"It looks pretty serious," he said in a telephone interview Thursday, adding that only about 20 percent of depressives are getting treated.

The majority suffer in silence or are misdiagnosed — as having tension, anxiety, personality disorder or weak character," he said.

The study, coordinated by the RAND Corp. in Santa Monica, Calif., looked at adult patients in a variety of settings — health maintenance organizations, group medical practices and solo practices — in Los Angeles, Chicago and Boston.

Researchers found that about half of the 11,242 subjects studied suffered from either depressive symptoms and/or one of eight chronic medical conditions — high

blood pressure, diabetes, advanced coronary heart disease, heart pain, arthritis, back problems, lung problems or digestive problems, Ware said.

Almost one-quarter of the subjects — 2,467 people — reported depressive symptoms, which they typically explained to their doctors as feeling "down in the dumps" or chronically tired, Ware said.

Such patients experienced as much or more bodily pain and stayed in bed as many or more days as patients with back, lung or digestive problems, heart pain, high blood pressure or diabetes, the researchers found.

Only arthritis proved more painful and only advanced heart disease caused more bed days, they said.

In addition, patients with depressive symptoms reported significantly less ability to function socially than those with any of the chronic medical conditions, the researchers said.

"If the doctor ... is unable to come up with a certified psychiatric diagnosis, that doesn't mean the person can be ignored," said Ware, a research psychologist and senior scientist at New England Medical Center Hospitals in Boston.

Such patients "have a tremendous unmet need and burden that costs a lot from society's point of view, because they're not able to function."

Dr. John Zajecka, clinical director of psychiatric treatment research at Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center in Chicago, said patients with depressive symptoms — even if they don't meet the classic definition of depressive disorder — "are very treatable" and often respond well to antidepressant medications.

About 4 percent of the population of the United States, or 9.9 million people, suffers from major depression in any given year, according to Dr. Martin B. Keller, director of psychiatric research at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

Tom y Jerry creates controversy for El Paso Times comic-page readers

EL PASO (AP) — The cat and mouse games of "Tom and Jerry" are usually not the stuff of controversy, until their antics are spelled out in Spanish.

For nearly a month, the El Paso Times has been running "Tom y Jerry" on its funny pages but criticism from disgruntled readers continues.

"Although I am not prejudiced in any manner, I must oppose this decision. The Times is a paper for the community of El Paso, which is still in the United States," Mark Yeck of El Paso wrote in a letter that appeared Sunday in the Times.

The newspaper has received more than 150 calls and letters about the comic-page addition. Ten readers canceled their subscriptions, said Managing Editor Paula Moore.

The bilingual duo began appearing in the Times on July 30 and were part of a comic page shakeup that gave the adios to "Andy Capp," "Redeive," and "Spiderman."

Readers also have complained about the omitted strips, but Moore said the loudest cries were heard

about the addition of "Tom y Jerry," obtained through Editors Press Service, Inc. of New York.

"Anytime we do anything that even hints at something like this, we get reaction," Mrs. Moore said Monday. "When we say 'Feliz Navidad!' at Christmas, we get two or three letters. When we started 'Vista' magazine — although it's in English, it's directed at Hispanics — we got quite a bit of reaction."

A week ago, the paper began including English subtitles with the strip at the suggestion of readers.

Three Spanish-language dailies are circulated in El Paso, but Mrs. Moore said the comic strip is part of the newspaper's effort to reflect the city, where 65 percent of the residents are Hispanic.

Still, some readers saw the strip as something else.

"Why run a Spanish language strip in an English language paper? I'm not paying for a foreign language paper," said Walter R. Reed of El Paso.

Ray Roberts, also of El Paso, called the new strip "an addition to the Times' other daily word puzzles"

and said he hoped it did not become a trend.

Some of the complaints have come from members of the Hispanic community.

El Paso Times columnist Joe Olvera addressed that sentiment over the weekend.

"The Hispanic community, rather than criticizing the Times for that one comic strip, should enjoy the efforts made in its behalf," he wrote Sunday.

Olvera suggested the Times publish the day's important stories in Spanish once a week, especially those that impact non-English speakers.

The Times published stories in Spanish regarding the implementation of immigration reform laws in 1987.

The city's afternoon daily, the El Paso Herald-Post, does not currently carry Spanish copy. It attempted to run Spanish news briefs in 1985, but there was little acceptance among readers, said Editor Tom King. The newspaper also found translations difficult, even for those fluent in Spanish.

Girl protects endangered animals from highway hazards, pollution

PARIS, Texas (AP) — Janae McKinney collects turtles, lots of turtles. She also collects bugs, tadpoles, frogs and any other animals she feels may be endangered by their surroundings.

Miss McKinney is not an ecologist. She is simply concerned about animals that seem to fall prey to automobiles, polluted water and other ecological mishaps that occur in today's society.

The 7-year-old, a first-grader this past school year at Aikin Elementary School in Paris, seems to be wise for her years. She knows the meaning of ecology and understands the need to sometimes help defenseless animals survive in less-than-friendly surroundings.

"I didn't like the fact that these animals, especially turtles, were getting run over on the highway," she said. "So one day I asked mother if she would stop so I could pick up a turtle off the road. I guess that is when it all started."

Janae's mother, Jan Semple McKinney, couldn't turn down her daughter's request to save a turtle

from being crushed on a busy road just outside Paris.

"I could tell she was very concerned, so I told her we would make it a project," Mrs. McKinney said. "I think she is being very responsible and has saved a lot of turtles from an early death on the highways."

Janae periodically patrols her neighborhood and a nearby creek for small creatures. If the creek is accidentally polluted, she collects the minnows and tadpoles from the water and takes them home to her portable fish tank.

She has encouraged her mother to take her riding on the roads just outside the city each morning before school to check for healthy, or injured, turtles on the highway. That duty requires a 6 a.m. wake-up call.

If one is spotted, they stop their car, pick it up and bring it home to add to an already large collection of terrapins, red-necked sliders and gopher turtles, just to name a few.

"These are native to the area," Janae said as she picked up a terrapin. "They are very sweet and make good pets."

Then she pointed to a red-necked slider, describing it as "mean." She said they will bite without much encouragement.

"I don't handle the red-necked slider and the big snapper turtles unless it is necessary," she said.

She keeps the terrapins and other dry land turtles in a cage. Other turtles that are accustomed to living in the water are kept in large containers of water.

Janae gets some help in her unusual hobby from sisters Jamie and Jill Beth. But her father, Mike McKinney, is not very enthusiastic about the project, according to Mrs. McKinney.

"Mike doesn't like to handle the animals, so we don't get a lot of help from him," she said. "But he is tolerant of it all and supportive of Janae's endeavor."

The budding ecologist is keeping a chart on the eating habits of the turtles and the other animals she collects. The turtles eat lettuce and other greens, tadpole eggs and some insects, she said.

Turning her animal rescue project into a classroom event was a challenge for Janae. Her teacher, Martha Upton, gave her the opportunity to explain the origin and habits of the turtles to her classmates.

Despite her penchant for gathering endangered creatures, Janae doesn't foresee herself as an ecologist or a biologist. The straight-A student has already decided she will be an obstetrician when she grows up.

"Since I was 5 years old, I have wanted to help babies be born," she said. "I'm sure that is what I will end up doing."

No sooner than she completes the sentence, she dashes off to the backyard to check on a family of lizards that has made a home behind the children's playhouse.

"There is never an idle moment," her mother said. "But I wouldn't have it any other way. One day she might be an influence in providing safe habitats for small animals."

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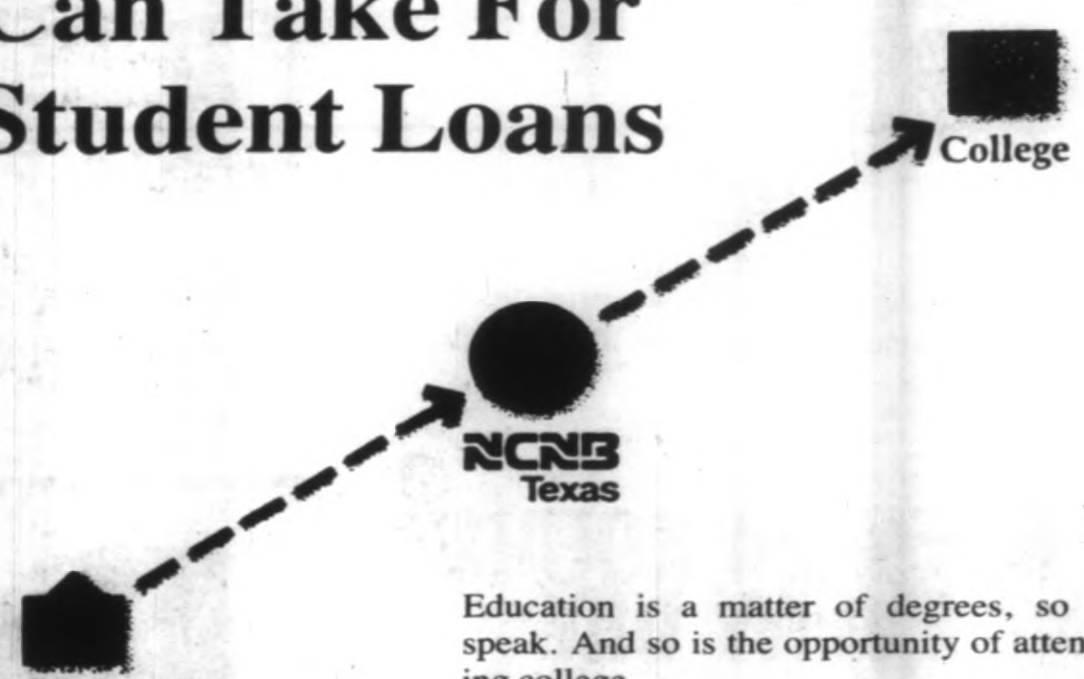
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Lark warning causes concern at end of latest Bond movie

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lawmakers are fuming over the placement and timing of a warning about the dangers of smoking in the latest James Bond movie, "Licence to Kill."

Philip Morris paid \$350,000 to the film maker, United Artists, to have its Lark cigarette appear in the movie, according to congressional testimony.

In response to concerns from the American Lung Association, American Heart Association and American Cancer Society, the movie contains the Surgeon General's warning about the effect of smoking.

Reps. Tom Luken, D-Ohio, and Bob Whittaker, R-Kan., have expressed reservations about the placement of the warning, which comes during the final credits.

"We believe that the health warning should appear at the beginning of the film, as many viewers ... will leave before they see a warning in the movie's credits," Luken and Whittaker said in a letter to the head of the Federal Trade Commission, Janet D. Steiger.

Luken said Friday the letter asks whether the commission has the authority to issue rules on tobacco advertising in movies.