

Researcher: Blood test for early-onset depression promising

How does a parent know if their child or teen is experiencing normal adolescent sadness or moodiness or - a more serious form of depression? The answer may one day lie in a simple blood test, *if* the results of a new early study are confirmed in larger populations. Early-onset major depressive disorder is a mental illness that affects people under 25. While about 2 to 4% of cases are diagnosed before adolescence, the numbers skyrocket to 10-25% with adolescence.

The No. 1 cause of death among the depressed is suicide according to a researcher. Once teens are depressed and not treated, there can be drug abuse, dropping out of school. Their whole lives can depend on these crucial and vulnerable years in which depression typically continues into adulthood and it must be treated. Redei's research team discovered eleven blood biomarkers for early-onset major depression. Their original work used rats, and they confirmed their results in this small study of humans that included 14 teens with major depressive disorder, and 14 teens without depression. The researchers discovered that they could distinguish between major depression with anxiety and without anxiety, based upon the genetic markers.

Researchers hope that having a science-based diagnosis will eliminate some of the stigma associated with mental illness. After more testing, these findings hopefully "may help psychiatrists to predict which treatments will be efficient, based on the biomarkers."

QUESTIONS : (EXPRESS YOUR IDEAS)

1. What is the main focus of this article?
2. How are you going to define Depression?
3. What is the cause of Depression?
4. How does Depression affect you as an individual?
5. Why is Depression considered dangerous and the cause of death for the depressed?
6. How can researcher distinguish major depression without anxiety to with anxiety?
7. Let's have a role play: I will assume the role of a depressed patient and as a health practitioner, how are you going to counsel me?