News & Notes

CULTURE, RACE, AND ETHNICITY: DISPARITIES IN MENTAL HEALTH

U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher, MD, PhD, has released a supplement to his 1999 report on mental health addressing the disparities in mental health across racial and ethnic groups. The report concludes that remarkable disparities in access to, quality of, and availability of mental health services exist in the U.S.

"While mental disorders may touch all Americans either directly or indirectly, all do not have equal access to treatment and services," said Dr. Satcher in releasing the report. "The failure to address these inequities is being played out in human and economic terms across the nation—on our streets, in homeless shelters, public health institutions, prisons, and jails. The revolution in science that has led to effective treatments for mental illnesses needs to benefit every American of every race, ethnicity, and culture. Everyone in need must have access to high-quality, effective, and affordable mental health services. Critically, culture counts. That means we need to embrace the nation's diversity in the conduct of research, in the education and training of our mental health service providers, and in the delivery of services."

The supplementary report focuses on African Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, Hispanic Americans, and white Americans. Many of the conclusions are generalizable to other minority groups, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.

The report shows how culture influences many aspects of mental illness and mental health. Culture can impact the way patients communicate and show their symptoms, how they cope, the range of their family and community supports, and their willingness to seek treatment. Dr. Satcher observed that when a history of racism, discrimination, and economic impoverishment is combined with mistrust and fear, members of minority populations may be deterred from using services.

The report highlights Dr. Satcher's observation that mental illnesses are as treatable as, or more treatable than, other illnesses such as diabetes, cancer, or heart disease.

The full report, Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity: A Supplement to Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General, is accessible at http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/cre/.

NEW GUIDELINES FOR MEASURING HEALTH STATUS

After nine years of work coordinated by the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Health Assembly has published new guidelines for measuring health status. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) provides the new international standard for describing and measuring health and disability. These guidelines classify all disease and health conditions without regard to cause. Missed work, for example, is documented without specifying the health-related cause. WHO estimates that up to 500 million healthy life-years are lost annually because of health-associated disabilities.

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) is available on-line at http://www3.who.int/icf/icftemplate.cfm.

CENSUS BUREAU RELEASES DATA ON PEOPLE WHO CHOSE MORE THAN ONE RACE

A total of 6.8 million people, or 2.4% of the total U.S. population, chose more than one racial category in the 2000 Census, according to a Census Bureau publication. *The Two or More Races Population: 2000* is one in a series of briefs issued by the Bureau summarizing 2000 Census data.

About one in three people who chose more than one "race" were of Hispanic "ethnicity," according to the report. Rates varied by region of the U.S. The West had the highest proportion of people reporting more than one race (4.3% of all respondents), followed by the Northeast (2.3%), South (1.8%), and Midwest (1.6%). The overall U.S. rate was 2.4%.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of all people reporting more than one race lived in 10 states: California, New York, Texas, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, New Jersey, Washington, Michigan, and Ohio. California (1.6 million) had the highest number, followed by New York and Texas

The highest percentage of people reporting two or more races was in Hawaii (21%), followed at a distance by Alaska (5.4%), California (4.7%), and Oklahoma (4.5%). Four counties in Hawaii had 19% to 29% of their populations reporting more than one race, while no other county in the U.S. exceeded 12%.

A listing of already released and forthcoming Cen-

sus 2000 briefs can be found on the Census Bureau's website at http://www.census.gov/population/www /cen2000/briefs.html.

SYPHILIS RATES DECLINE

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that in 2000, U.S. syphilis rates declined to an all-time low, continuing a decade-long decline. The CDC suggests that the elimination of this sexually transmitted disease is now within close reach.

In 2000, 5,979 cases of primary and secondary syphilis were reported in the United States, representing a decline of 9.6% since 1999. The reported rate of syphilis for 2000 was 2.2 cases per 100,000 population, compared with 2.4 per 100,000 in 1999.

The CDC links the decline in the syphilis rate to eradication programs. In addition to nationwide efforts, CDC has funded syphilis elimination demonstration programs in three U.S. counties. From 1999 to 2000, the sites experienced larger decreases in their syphilis rates than the 9.6% nationwide rate of decline. In Nashville, Tennessee, the rate fell 20%, while the number of syphilis cases in Indianapolis, Indiana, decreased 24.6%. Wake County, Tennessee's rates dropped 26.8%.

The STD Surveillance 2000 Supplement: Syphilis Surveillance Annual Report-2000 can be accessed on-line at https://www2.cdc.gov/nchstp_od/piweb/stdorderform .asp.

HOW YOUNG PEOPLE USE THE INTERNET FOR HEALTH INFORMATION

The Kaiser Family Foundation has released a report titled Generation Rx.com, highlighting the results of a survey on how young adults, ages 15-24, use websites. The survey results indicate that young people are using the Internet to seek health information as well as entertainment. The survey report includes data on how young people search for information, their concerns about confidentiality (e.g., concerns about others being able to track their use of websites), and their thoughts on using filtering technology and pornographic websites. The report also includes data on which websites are visited and how often young people use the Internet.

Generation Rx.com: How Young People Use the Internet for Health Information can be accessed on-line at http:// www.kff.org/content/2001/20011211a/.