

Chapter 3: Patient Characteristics—Demographics

Age

An understanding of a population’s age distribution is important in determining their likely service needs and the appropriate treatment interventions.

VA patients with depression constitute an older population, with an average age of 55.4 years. Twenty-three percent are 65 years of age or older. This suggests that services targeting depressed patients in the VA will need to be sensitive to the needs of seniors, including the demands of comorbid medical conditions, possible need for assistance in transportation, etc.

The psychiatric comorbidities that must be considered in the treatment of depression vary with age, with substance abuse being relatively more common in the 35 to 49 year range, PTSD comorbidities being concentrated among the Vietnam era veterans (50-64 years of age), and other complicated depression being relatively more common among the very old (≥ 80 years).

As the veteran population grows older in the coming years, depression complicated by dementia, is likely to become more salient.

Table 3.A: Veteran Age, by Comorbidity Group

					Overall (N=305,096)*
	Dep alone or w/OthAnx	Dep + SAbuse	Dep + PTSD	Complicated Dep	
< 35 years (n=16,890)	6.3%	4.74%	4.23%	5.31%	5.54%
35 - 49 years (n=82,660)	25.0%	41.35%	16.79%	24.67%	27.09%
50 - 64 years (n=134,757)	38.3%	47.09%	61.03%	32.82%	44.17%
65 - 79 years (n=58,854)	25.43%	6.33%	14.55%	27.86%	19.29%
≥ 80 years (n=11,935)	4.85%	0.50%	3.39%	9.34%	3.91%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

* n=26 patients had missing age

Gender

Gender is an important variable to consider in diagnostic and treatment processes, with the VA increasingly emphasizing the need to ensure access to treatment for women veterans. According to The Center for Women Veterans, in July of 2000, there were 1.2 million women veterans. Women veterans comprised 4.5% of the veteran population using VA health care services in 2002 (Roswell 2002). Because women constitute approximately 15 percent of the active duty forces, the percentage of VA users who are women is likely to increase (Roswell 2002).

Virtually all community-based studies of major depression find that the prevalence of depression is twice as high among women as it is among men (Kessler et al. 2003). Thus, if women have adequate access to depression treatment, they should have approximately twice the representation in the depression registry as they do in the general population of VA users.

In FY02, women comprised 9.6% of the patients in the Depression Registry (approximately twice the percentage of women VA users), suggesting that women veterans are receiving services in proportion to the expected prevalence of depressive disorders in this subpopulation. Women were less likely to have depression complicated by substance abuse than were men (OR =0.46).

Table 3.B: Veteran Gender, by Comorbidity Group

	Comorbidity Groups by Gender				Overall
	Dep alone or w/OthAnx	Dep& Sub Abuse	Dep & PTSD	Other Complicated Dep	
	N=158,768	N=67,890	N=57,720	N=20,744	N=305,122
Gender					
Female	11.5%	4.6%	9.9%	10.9%	9.6%
Male	88.5%	95.4%	90.1%	89.0%	90.4%
Total	100%	100%	100.00	100.00	100.00

Race/Ethnicity

The VHA is committed to ensuring appropriate treatment for all of its beneficiaries. Tracking patient treatment by ethnic/racial groups may assist in this goal. Disparities have been reported previously in the treatments offered to psychiatric and medical patients by ethnic group (Wells et al. 2001; Copeland et al. 2001; Kales et al. 2000).

In September 2001, African-Americans comprised 8.8%-10% of the total veteran population and 13.2% of all VA healthcare users were African-American. {Department of Veterans Affairs 2001 #9006}(Department of Veterans Affairs 2001).

Using structured diagnostic interviews, both the ECA and the NCS found a significantly lower life-time prevalence of affective disorders among African Americans than among Whites (Kessler et al. 1994; 1991; Kessler et al. 2003). The ECA reported that the life-time prevalence rate of depression in African-Americans was 4.5%; the NCS reported that the lifetime prevalence was 11.6%.

African-Americans comprise 13% of the depression registry, only slightly less than the proportion of African Americans using VA services, suggesting that they are accessing depression treatment in the VA in proportion to or at higher proportions than would be expected given the prevalence of depression among this subgroup. African Americans were more likely to be diagnosed with both depression and substance abuse than Whites (OR=1.95).

We note that approximately 20% of veterans do not have race or ethnic group specified in VA data.

Table 3.C: Veteran Race/Ethnicity, by Comorbidity Group

	Dep alone or w/OthAnx	Dep + SAbuse	Dep + PTSD	complicated Dep	Overall
	N=158,768	N=67,890	N=57,720	N=20,744	N=305,122
Hispanic	4.8%	4.9%	5.2%	8.9%	5.2%
American Indian	0.2%	0.7%	0.5%	0.2%	0.4%
Black	8.7%	23.9%	11.1%	13.9%	12.9%
Asian	0.3%	0.2%	0.5%	0.5%	0.3%
White	60.4%	57.4%	63.1%	61.3%	60.3%
Unknown	25.7%	12.8%	19.7%	15.1%	20.9%
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Marital Status

Marital status is an important indicator of social support. Several studies have reported that married individuals are less likely to develop depression than are single or divorced individuals (Kessler et al. 2003). The majority of VA patients with a depressive diagnoses were not married. Patients with both substance abuse and depression were the least likely to be married of the four comorbidity groups, with only 27% of these patients being married compared to 53% of patients with depression alone or with other anxiety disorders.

Table 3.D: Veteran Marital Status, by Comorbidity Group

	Dep alone or w/OthAnx	Dep + SAbuse	Dep + PTSD	Complicated Dep	Overall
	N=158,768	N=67,890	N=57,720	N=20,744	N=305,122
Divorced or Separated	25.8%	45.9%	25.3%	24.5%	30.1%
Married	53.0%	27.1%	59.3%	47.4%	48.0%
Never Married	15.3%	23.5%	11.8%	21.2%	16.9%
Widowed	5.9%	3.5%	3.6%	6.9%	4.9%
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

VISN Analyses

Detailed demographics by VISN are reported below in the following pages. Among all VISNs, VISN 3 has the oldest population of depressed veterans; VISN 17 has the largest percentage of depressed women veterans, and VISN 6 has the largest percentage of depressed African American veterans.

Section 3: Demographics by VISN

Section 3: Demographics by VISN																					All	
Visn1	Visn2	Visn3	Visn4	Visn5	Visn6	Visn7	Visn8	Visn9	Visn10	Visn11	Visn12	Visn15	Visn16	Visn17	Visn18	Visn19	Visn20	Visn21	Visn22	Visn23	All	
15,261	8,357	11,389	13,786	7,424	13,955	17,387	28,388	14,096	12,800	12,166	11,393	14,167	27,988	13,648	13,329	8,791	15,508	13,814	17,217	14,258	305,122	
Age %	Visn1	Visn2	Visn3	Visn4	Visn5	Visn6	Visn7	Visn8	Visn9	Visn10	Visn11	Visn12	Visn15	Visn16	Visn17	Visn18	Visn19	Visn20	Visn21	Visn22	Visn23	
< 35	5.2	6	3.4	5.1	6.5	6.2	5.3	4.2	5	5.3	5.4	5	5	6.1	5.8	6.4	6.5	7.5	5.3	6.4	5.7	
35 - 49	24.5	27.9	20	25.2	34.9	29.6	29.2	23.9	26.4	28.6	29	28	27.1	27.6	28.2	26.1	28.6	31	26	26.4	27.1	
50 - 64	43.6	41	38.1	42.8	41.6	44.9	45.7	41.6	47.2	41.7	43.3	43.9	44	45.7	46.6	44.6	45.6	46.2	50	45	41.7	
65 - 79	21.9	20.3	30.3	22.5	14.4	16.7	17.1	24.6	18.6	20.4	18.8	19.4	20.2	17.7	16.4	18.7	16.7	12.9	15.3	18.2	20.4	
>= 80	4.9	4.7	8.3	4.5	2.6	2.7	2.7	5.6	2.9	4	3.6	3.7	3.8	2.8	3.1	4.2	2.5	2.4	3.5	4.1	5.2	
																					All	
		Visn1	Visn2	Visn3	Visn4	Visn5	Visn6	Visn7	Visn8	Visn9	Visn10	Visn11	Visn12	Visn15	Visn16	Visn17	Visn18	Visn19	Visn20	Visn21	Visn22	Visn23
Age	Mean	56.6	55.6	60.2	56.4	52.8	54.1	54.4	57.7	55.2	55.6	55.1	55.5	55.7	54.6	54.5	55.4	54.1	52.9	54.8	55.3	55.9
	Std.	13.4	13.8	14.1	13.4	12.5	12.4	12.2	13.5	12.3	13.2	12.9	13	12.9	12.6	12.4	13.3	12.6	12.2	12.3	13.3	13.6
																					All	
Gender %	Visn1	Visn2	Visn3	Visn4	Visn5	Visn6	Visn7	Visn8	Visn9	Visn10	Visn11	Visn12	Visn15	Visn16	Visn17	Visn18	Visn19	Visn20	Visn21	Visn22	Visn23	
female	7.9	9.6	5.4	7.8	11.5	11.4	10.6	10.1	7.9	8.3	8.3	7.6	8.6	10	12.6	11.6	11	12.1	10.2	9.4	9	9.6
male	92.1	90.4	94.6	92.2	88.5	88.6	89.4	89.9	92.1	91.7	91.7	92.4	91.4	90	87.4	88.4	89	87.9	89.8	90.6	91	90.4
Race %	Visn1	Visn2	Visn3	Visn4	Visn5	Visn6	Visn7	Visn8	Visn9	Visn10	Visn11	Visn12	Visn15	Visn16	Visn17	Visn18	Visn19	Visn20	Visn21	Visn22	Visn23	
Hispanic	1.9	1	7.8	1.1	1.5	1	0.8	23.1	0.4	1	0.8	2	1	1.5	15.2	11.5	6.2	1.6	5.1	7	0.6	5.2
Am. Indian	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.1	1.2	0.8	0.9	0.6	0.3	1.3	0.4
Black	4.7	8.8	16.4	13.9	36.6	20	27.9	6.4	10.7	12.5	14.7	21.3	9.4	19.7	13.3	3.9	4.2	5.9	10	11.7	4.1	12.9
Asian	0.1	0	0.3	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.8	3.4	1	0	0.3
White	73.7	70.5	54.1	65.7	42.5	54.9	52.2	49	73.1	64.8	66.5	55.7	69.1	60.6	55.3	59.6	74.4	65.1	57.2	48	68.4	60.3
Unknown	19.4	19.4	21.4	19.2	19.1	23.7	18.9	21.3	15.6	21.5	17.7	20.3	20.2	17.7	15.9	23.5	14.2	25.7	23.8	32	25.4	21
Marital Status %	Visn1	Visn2	Visn3	Visn4	Visn5	Visn6	Visn7	Visn8	Visn9	Visn10	Visn11	Visn12	Visn15	Visn16	Visn17	Visn18	Visn19	Visn20	Visn21	Visn22	Visn23	
Divorce/Separated	29.4	27	22.5	25.7	32.9	27.7	28.8	26.3	29	32.9	34.2	33.1	30.6	28.6	29.7	30.8	32.3	35.9	34.4	34.4	31	30.1
Married	44.7	45.5	43.1	47.9	35.3	53.4	52.4	55.6	55.4	45.6	43.1	39.2	50.7	54.1	53.6	50.6	49.6	45.1	39.8	35.5	47.5	48
Never Married	19.7	21.6	26.4	20.8	25.9	14.9	14.1	12.9	11.4	15.6	17.3	22.2	13.7	13	12.6	13.7	14.4	15.2	21.8	25.1	16.5	16.9
Widowed	6.2	5.9	8	5.5	5.9	4	4.6	5.2	4.2	5.9	5.4	5.5	5	4.3	4.1	4.9	3.8	3.8	4	5	5	5
All	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100