

## It's Harder for Some to Seek Help

By Surajit Sen Sharma

Campus violence and the mental health of students are more than just broad issues to be addressed by administrators; they are part of the everyday reality on college campuses. Although research suggests that at least 20% of the U.S. population is affected by depression, serious research on how this statistic relates to college students is rarely done. Only in the wake of particularly violent campus events like the Virginia Tech shootings does the nation wake up and start to take stock of the situation.

A recent survey conducted by the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor found that almost 15% of students surveyed experienced distressing periods. Researchers found that more than 50% of college students who show significant anxiety or depression symptoms avoid seeking help, even though help is available to them at no cost.

The survey also found that:

- Socioeconomically disadvantaged students had a greater chance of having mental health issues.
- Socioeconomically disadvantaged students were twice as likely to avoid seeking help as their wealthier counterparts.
- Students of Asian or Pacific Islander heritage were more prone to avoiding seeking help for mental health issues.
- Women students recognized the need for treatment and sought help more often than male students.

In addition, the survey found several other factors that affected the willingness of students to seek help for mental health issues aside from demographic factors. These were:

- lack of perceived need (i.e., failing to recognize a mental health issue)
- lack of awareness of services or insurance coverage
- skepticism about the effectiveness of treatment

Researcher Daniel Eisenberg, Ph.D., said understanding the reasons behind students' decisions to seek treatment has important implications. Most people afflicted with depression begin experiencing symptoms before age 24 and continue to struggle with depression into adulthood.

Researchers also suggested that "sophomore blues" resulting from midterm academic pressure and mental upsets during home-to-school transition periods can carry over into adulthood.