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Volume 9, numéro 1, 2022

Congress October 2021

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1085644ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.26443/ijwpc.v9i1.322>

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Éditeur(s)

McGill University Library

ISSN

2291-918X (numérique)

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Citer ce document

Jeffers, C. (2022). Traditional & narrative practices of treatment for depression and depressive symptoms in older adults. *The International Journal of Whole Person Care*, 9(1), 14–15. <https://doi.org/10.26443/ijwpc.v9i1.322>

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TRADITIONAL & NARRATIVE PRACTICES OF TREATMENT FOR DEPRESSION AND DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS IN OLDER ADULTS

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Keywords: Depression in older adults, Narrative medicine

An analysis and evaluation of the literature regarding traditional treatment methods for depression among older adults compared the effectiveness of the results to the benefits of a treatment plan that integrates the narrative practices of storytelling and reflexive writing. Priority was given to peer-reviewed journal articles from 2008 forward, though some earlier information was used for clarification and foundation building.

The formation and implementation of individual patient treatment plans for depression and depressive symptoms are impacted by many variables such as: Confusion surrounding provider treatment guidelines, social organizational context, organizational climate and the differing definitions of depression that exist among providers and patients. Patients often struggle to self-identify or put words to depressive symptoms and the process of reflexive writing is transformative and increases narrative competency, which strengthens a patient's ability to give an account of oneself, aiding in self-discovery and personal symptom awareness.

An imbalance of power exists in the clinical encounter and the practices and principles of the discipline of Narrative Medicine can have a positive impact on strengthening the therapeutic alliance and treatment outcomes. Older adults with depression and depressive symptoms have a lower quality of life and often feel less productive in their communities. Traditional pharmacologically based depression treatment plans are one-dimensional and often fail to address personal patient context and preference. Older adults living with diagnosed depression and depressive symptoms can be better served with treatment plans that include narrative techniques that increase alliance, affiliation, self-awareness and self-discovery. ■