



Report Links Gay Men's High-Risk Behavior to Depression

By GayWebMonkey.com

New York City - A new report by a leading gay men's health group says scientific research shows that much of gay men's risky sex and drug use is fueled by high levels of depression and related disorders, such as anxiety and dysthymia, a type of mild chronic depression.

The report, titled "Living on the Edge: Gay Men, Depression and Risk-Taking" was released Friday by the Medius Institute for Gay Men's Health, a gay men's health advocacy group in New York City.

In one key study of gay men's mental health cited by the report, more than 17 percent of participants had active symptoms of depression—about twice the rate of current depression in general.

Other studies indicate that the lifetime risk of depression is roughly three times higher for gay men.

"Clearly depression and related disorders are a major challenge for gay men's health," said Spencer Cox, executive director of the Medius Institute and author of the report, in a media release. "We need to educate gay men about the symptoms of depression and related disorders, and to increase the availability of quality mental health services."

In addition, studies show strong links between depression and high-risk behaviors that are alarmingly frequent in gay men. Substance use, high-risk sex, HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases are all more common in people with signs of depression.

"For the most part depression doesn't seem to cause high-risk behavior directly, but it certainly 'pumps up the volume' on risk-taking," said Cox. "And risky behavior may increase the likelihood of depression." Cox pointed to methamphetamine use, which is associated with depression, and which can cause long-term changes in the brain that lead to depression.

Cox added, "For gay men, depression seems to play a central role in health, similar to obesity for Americans in general. Just as overweight people have increased risks of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other serious illnesses, gay men with depression and related disorders are at increased risk for a host of bad things."

Written By Troy Espera