

## AS@W...FOR TEACHERS

### What is the prevalence of depression in the education sector?

- ❑ Research has found that approximately 1 out of 10 individuals working in the education sector will have depression over the course of a year. Females (9.6%) are more likely to have depression than males (6.3%). Those at highest risk fell between the ages of 35-49.

### What are some factors in the workplace that contribute to increased stress and incidence of low mood and depression among teachers?

- ❑ Factors include:
  - Bullying
  - Harassment
  - Unacceptable student behaviour
  - Lack of organization of school and work
  - Lack of support and cooperation
  - Lack of necessary equipment and facilities to carry out one's role as a teacher
  - Lack of training and career development opportunities
  - Nature of the work:
    - Heavy workloads
    - Overcrowding
    - Disruptive students
    - Number of special needs students
    - Mental health issues among students
- ❑ Stressors in teaching were examined for a group of academics and it was found that the following stressors were most prevalent (in descending order):
  - Interpersonal conflict
  - Time/effort wasted
  - Reward/recognition
  - Work overload
  - Lack of control
  - Conditions of employment
- ❑ Older employees in academia have been found to more frequently report interpersonal conflict as a significant stressor while younger employees have been found to report time/effort stressors with greater frequency.



## AS@W Antidepressant Skills at Work

Dealing with Mood Problems in the Workplace

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- ❑ A greater proportion of females were found to state interpersonal conflict and time/effort wasted as major stressors as compared to males. In contrast, a greater proportion of males found lack of reward/recognition a major stressor as compared to females.
- ❑ A report from the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work reported that a 2007 survey by teachers' unions found that the top five stressors reported by teachers were:
  - Role overload
  - Increased class size per teacher
  - Unacceptable students' behaviour
  - Lack of support from management
  - Workload/working intensity
    - A Statistics Canada report which summarized four reports produced by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) found that English secondary school teachers worked more than 53 hours per week, with 19 hours of that time spent solely on preparation and marking. It was also reported that in recent years, workload levels had increased. This report also found widespread symptoms of stress with teachers having varying abilities to cope with that stress. Age and sex were found to be important in the way in which teachers deal with stress. Younger female teachers reported the worst impacts of stress and a lesser coping ability than their older or male counterparts.
- ❑ A study of primary school teachers found that managing student misbehaviour and job time constraints predicted burnout characteristics such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.

## What are some possible consequences due to stress that teachers may experience?

- ❑ Consequences include:
  - Familial problems
  - Work-life balance problems
  - Burnout
  - Depression
  - Emotional exhaustion
  - High absenteeism
  - Working long hours without extra pay
  - Sleeping problems
  - Insomnia



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- Cardiovascular diseases and their symptoms
  - Migraine headaches
  - High blood pressure
  - Gastrointestinal disorders
  - Addictions
- One study investigating the role of work-related stress in the education sector found that 37% of teachers reported health problems that were linked to their work life.
  - Stress, a risk factor for depression, has been found to be a contributor to illness among teachers and a cause for some to leave the profession entirely.

### **What are some factors that are essential for a manageable workload?**

- Time
- Resources
- Support
- Respect
- School leadership

### **What are some actions that can be used to improve the workplace environment for teachers?**

- Establish a mentoring/coaching scheme for new and current staff
- Develop an information and awareness-raising program
- Designate a health representative that is knowledgeable about psychosocial issues
- Reinforce and reward good standards of behaviour
- Encourage collaborative problem-solving and good communication
- Create opportunities for performance-related feedback
- Build organization-wide commitment by demonstrating management support, raising awareness and promote good practice
- Provide access to occupational health support



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- Ensure that staff are aware of work-related stress and depression and train them to identify symptoms of stress and depression
- Provide training on stress management for managers and workers
- Provide training for teachers on behaviour management and the teaching skills to deal with difficult behaviour
- Teach and reinforce respect and good behaviour
- Involve staff in a risk assessment process
- Check and maintain the quality of the work environment and equipment
- Undertake thorough planning of preventive actions
- Combine work-oriented and worker-orientated measures
- Introduce context-specific solutions to problems
- Use appropriate external expertise
- Institute effective social dialogue, partnership, and worker involvement
- Take sustained preventive actions and enlisting senior management support

### **What are some actions to improve work organization and workload for teachers?**

- Train teachers in the causes and solutions for work-related stress and depression
- Get commitment from all levels of the school to tackle work-related stress and depression
- Review workload, demands and overtime periodically for all staff
- Let teachers have some decision-making authority over their methods, patterns and deadlines for teaching



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## What are some actions that can be taken to put policies and support in place to reduce stress and depression?

- Develop and implement policies that encourage and support a positive, healthy work environment, including policies on work-related stress and depression for teaching and administrative staff
- Develop strategies and tools for stress and depression prevention
- Develop actions with students and their parents to improve behaviour of students
- Perform annual assessments of the impact of stress and depression in teachers
- Evaluate risk management programs
- Perform stress and depression audits on aspects such as:
  - Absenteeism
  - Staff turnover
  - Presenteeism
  - Bullying
- Provide the opportunity for flexible work practices
- Openly consult staff prior to making major organizational changes
- Utilize the local community and media to promote awareness of the impact of stress and depression on the quality of teaching and the health of teachers

## References

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## ABOUT AS@W

### How was *Antidepressant Skills at Work* developed?

The guide was developed by British Columbia Mental Health and Addiction Services (BCMHAS), an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. The guide and accompanying materials have been authored by **Dr. Dan Bilsker**, **Dr. Merv Gilbert**, and **Dr. Joti Samra** – registered psychologists and scientist-practitioners with expertise in issues relating to workplace mental health. These psychologists are with the Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction (CARMHA), Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University. The guide was written on the basis of a review of the scientific literature; consultation with employers, unions, mental health providers and employee groups; and adaptation of existing self-care depression programs.

### How can the manual be accessed?

The manual is available for viewing and free download at [www.carmha.ca/antidepressant-skills/work/](http://www.carmha.ca/antidepressant-skills/work/) or from [www.bcmhas.ca/research](http://www.bcmhas.ca/research). Individuals or organizations are free to print and make multiple copies of the guide, with permission from CARMHA ([publications@carmha.ca](mailto:publications@carmha.ca)). Print copies and audio CDs are available at a low cost from our ordering page at [www.carmha.ca/ordering](http://www.carmha.ca/ordering).

For further information about AS@W and associated resources and materials, please visit [www.carmha.ca/selfcare](http://www.carmha.ca/selfcare). This information will be updated on a regular basis.



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