



# Collegium News

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October 2005

Newsletter of the Cannon Valley Elder Collegium  
"A Questing Mind Never Retires"

Fall Term  
2005/2006

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## Depression at Any Age

There are many life changes and challenges that people typically face in the latter part of their lives. Among these are retirement, loss of spouse or other family members and friends, and health problems or disabilities associated with aging. It is tempting to think that depression is a normal response to these kinds of stresses. However, medical researchers and practitioners emphasize that depression is not normal at any age, regardless of difficulties that arise. Depression can be triggered by a number of factors, but its cause is a physical change in the brain that affects the balance of chemicals known as neurotransmitters. Untreated depression, especially in the older population, not only diminishes quality and length of life but also compromises physical health, mental function, and the ability to recover from illness or injury.

In spite of this, depression often goes undiagnosed among older people for a number of reasons. There are medical problems common among the aging that mimic or trigger depression, for example, heart failure or hypothyroidism. It is too easy to focus on the medical condition and ignore the accompanying changes in mental health. There are several medications frequently used by this population that have depression as a possible side effect, such as beta blockers for hypertension or sleeping pills. To confuse matters more, symptoms of depression are often not only different from those of younger adults, but may be similar to symptoms of other diseases common to older adults. It can be very difficult to sort them out from symptoms of cardiac, digestive system, and joint diseases, or even Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases.

The National Institute of Mental Health considers depression in people over sixty-five a "major public health problem." Senior depression affects 6 million Americans, but only 10% receive treatment. The cost of untreated depression is high. It is estimated that 50% more is spent on health care for seniors who are depressed than for those who are not or who have been treated. Many hospital beds are filled

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### Fall Meeting 2005

#### **YOU ARE INVITED TO:**

The Cannon Valley Elder Collegium  
9th Annual Fall Meeting  
Sunday Afternoon, October 23, 2005  
at 2:00 pm

United Methodist Church,  
1401 South Maple St.  
Northfield MN

2:00 pm Coffee, Dessert and  
Conversation

2:30 pm Description of Courses for  
Winter & Spring 2006 and a presentation:  
"The World by Jim Reiley"

Come to recognize **Jim Reiley** who is retiring as a CVEC instructor. Jim taught a class during the very first session of CVEC, fall of 1997, and has taught a CVEC class almost every year. We are hoping many CVEC members will come to the Fall Meeting to recognize Jim and thank him for his years of service. CVEC is a success because we have amazing professors like Jim. By recognizing Jim Reiley we are in fact honoring all of our outstanding professors.