



College Student Perception Of Campus Stress Resources, Effects Of Stress On Eating, And Self-Reported Mental Health

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Introduction

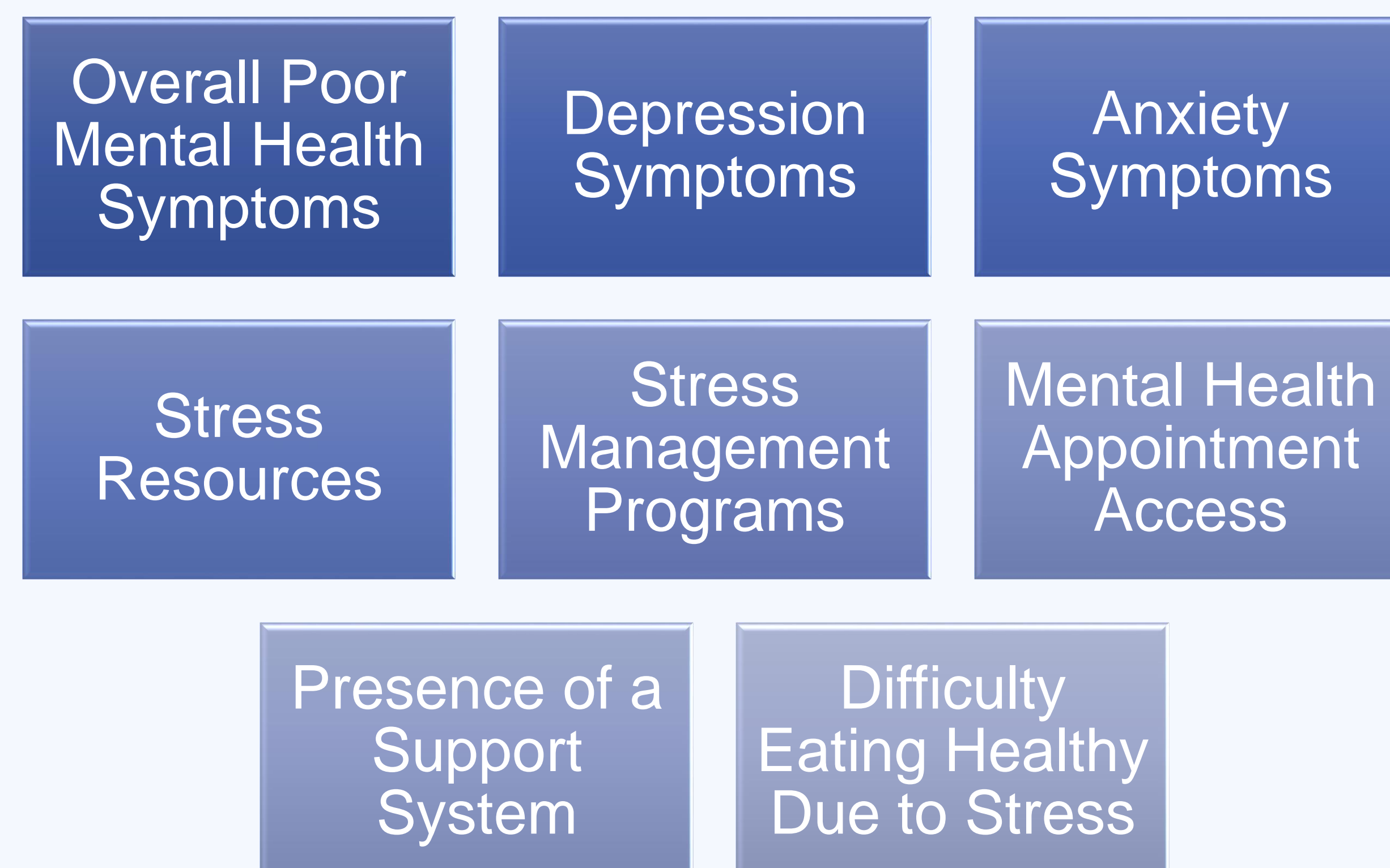
- The campus environment can largely shape the health status of college students.
- Students are at a time of high-stress and may develop coping mechanisms to deal with this stress, impacting health¹.
- Stress has been linked to poorer physical health and mental health².
- Stress may cause unhealthy eating and worsen mental health³.
- Resources available to students to deal with stress may impact their coping behaviors and mental health⁴.

Objective

- To investigate students' perceptions of their campus stress resources, effects of stress on eating, and mental health.

Methods

- A survey was distributed to students at a large, Appalachian university via email.
- Students were asked about:
 - Perceptions of campus resources for stress using a 5-point Likert Scale
 - Mental health support using a 5-point Likert Scale
 - Mental health symptoms over the past 30 days
- Response frequencies and Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted to determine the significance of a relationship between perceptions and mental health symptoms.



Results

- Responses (n=1956) found that:
 - 49% of students agreed that there are stress resources on campus,
 - 52% agreed that there are stress management programs available
 - 38% agreed that it is difficult to eat healthy because of stress at school
 - 45% agreed that they are able to make a mental health appointment if needed
 - 51% agreed that there is a support system available.

Table 1. Significant associations with number of **poor mental health** days.

Variable	Perception of Stress Resources	Stress Management Programs	Mental Health Appointment Access	Presence of a Support System	Difficulty Eating Healthy Due to Stress
P Value	0.0018	0.0103	<0.0001	0.002	<0.0001

Table 2. Significant associations with number of days with **depression symptoms**.

Variable	Perception of Stress Resources	Stress Management Programs	Mental Health Appointment Access	Presence of a Support System	Difficulty Eating Healthy Due to Stress
P Value	<0.0001	0.0061	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001

Table 3. Significant associations with number of days with **anxiety symptoms**.

Variable	Perception of Stress Resources	Stress Management Programs	Mental Health Appointment Access	Presence of a Support System	Difficulty Eating Healthy Due to Stress
P Value	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001

Results

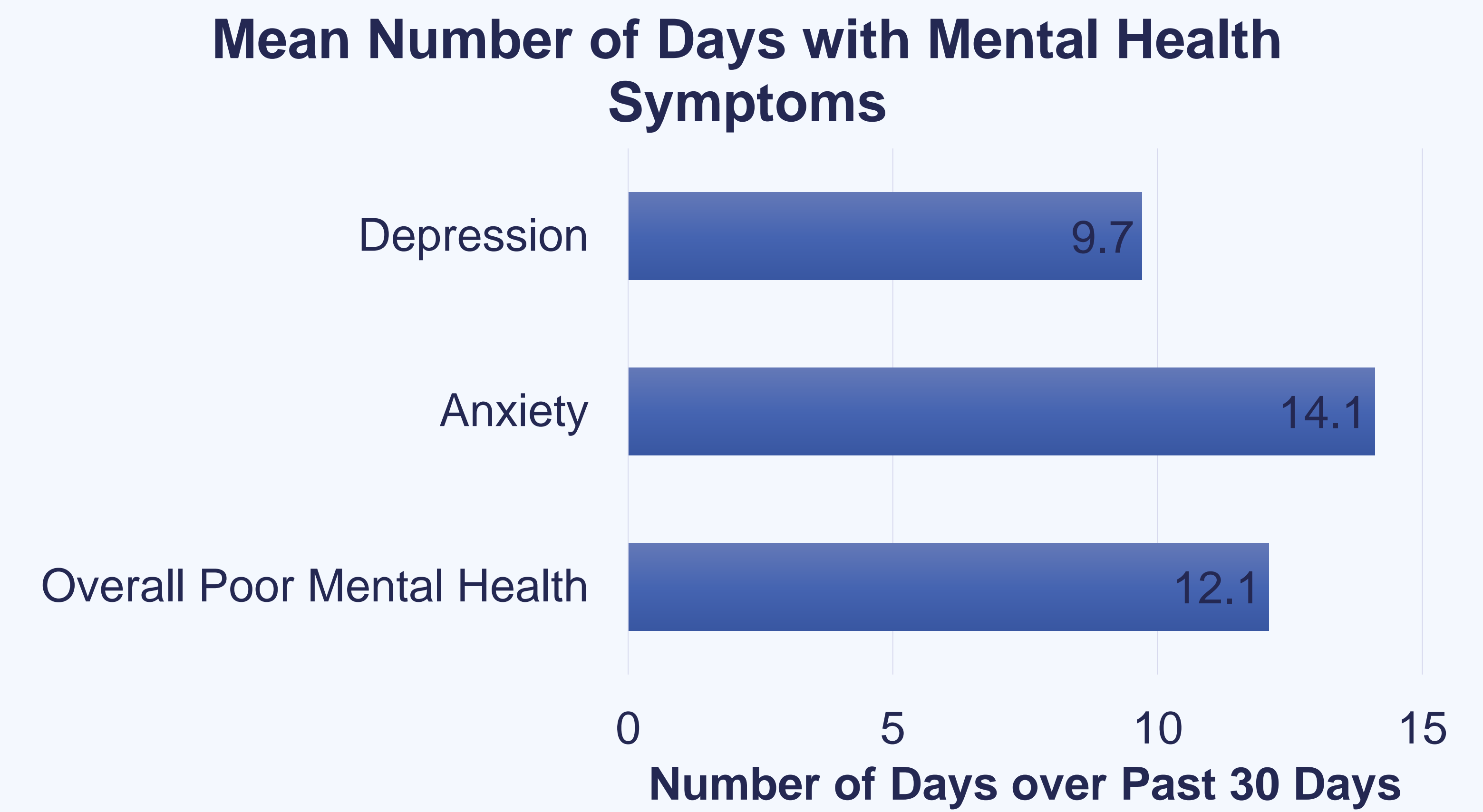


Figure 1. Mean number of days of self-perceived mental health symptoms of students over the previous 30 days.

Conclusion

- On average, students report feeling:
 - anxious for almost half of the days each month.
 - depression almost one third of the days of each month.
- There is a significant association between experience of mental health symptoms and perceptions of stress resources, stress management programs, mental health appointment access, presence of a support system, and difficulty eating healthy due to stress.
- Interventions targeting stress management may improve mental health and healthy eating.

Works Cited

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4. Garriott, P. O., & Nisle, S. (2017). Stress, Coping, and Perceived Academic Goal Progress in First-Generation College Students: The Role of Institutional Supports. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000068>