



February 18, 2016 – Grand Rapids, MI

How SAD Was Measured

Let's take a look at the study that concluded SAD was folklore. The researchers used data from the 2006 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System questionnaire (BRFSS 2006). This is a telephone survey conducted every year in the US. In 2006, over 34,000 people responded to the phone survey. The survey varies from 199 questions for the short version and up to 373 questions for the full survey. The phone numbers are generated at random and reflect the population distribution of the US.

Because the survey is given throughout the year, all areas in the U.S. will be included and the surveys are answered in every season of the year. The researchers used those participants who were asked questions related to depression and anxiety, officially known as the Patient Health Questionnaire–8 Depression Scale. Researchers also looked up the weather in the area code the day the survey was answered.

The researchers had just a few pieces of information: the season the survey was taken, the answers to the Depression Scale, and the weather and latitude the day the survey was taken. Actually, they had hundreds of other bits of data, but these are the ones they used. What they found was that depression was unrelated to latitude, season, or sunlight. They then concluded that the results do not support the validity of a seasonal factor in major depression. Then they gave their opinion about SAD being folklore as I talked about in [Tuesday's message](#).



Are they correct? Is this over? Is SAD just a figment of our imagination? We'll take a look on Saturday. If you want to take the Patient Health Questionnaire–8 Depression Scale for yourself, check out the link in the second reference.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

References:

1. [Clinical Psychological Science](#). 2016. doi:10.1177/2167702615615867
2. Depression Survey: <http://patienteducation.stanford.edu/research/phq.pdf>

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