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# Major Depressive Disorder in the Primary Care Setting

## STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE REMISSION AND RECOVERY

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# Major Depressive Disorder in the Primary Care Setting: Strategies to Achieve Remission and Recovery

## PROVIDER STATEMENT

This educational activity is jointly provided by the North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians (NCAFP) and Spire Learning.



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## TARGET AUDIENCE

Family physicians and other health care providers who treat patients with major depressive disorder (MDD).

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Examine key clinical factors that impede optimal therapeutic management of individuals with MDD in the primary care setting
- Implement into practice symptom management strategies that promote symptomatic remission, full functional recovery, and relapse prevention in persons with MDD

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Family physicians (FPs) are on the frontline for depression care, often being the first line of defense for diagnosis and management. This 1.25 hour, CME-certified activity will provide clinicians with a comprehensive review on the following:

- Clinical factors in the primary care setting that influence treatment outcomes in MDD
- Identification and management of residual symptoms
- Tools for effective monitoring of treatment outcomes
- Nonpharmacologic and pharmacologic therapies to treat patients to goal: remission and recovery
- Strategies to promote patient-focused, recovery-oriented care

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## ACCREDITATION

This enduring activity, Major Depressive Disorder in the Primary Care Setting: Strategies to Achieve Remission and Recovery, from 09/04/2015 to 09/03/2016, has been reviewed and is acceptable for up to 1.25 Prescribed credit(s) by the American Academy of Family Physicians. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

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The activity content was developed by Bradley N. Gaynes, MD, MPH, and W. Clay Jackson, MD, DipTh.

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#### **CME QUESTIONS?**

Please contact Marietta Ellis at [mellis@ncafp.com](mailto:mellis@ncafp.com).



# Major Depressive Disorder in the Primary Care Setting: Strategies to Achieve Remission and Recovery

Bradley N. Gaynes, MD, MPH; W. Clay Jackson, MD, DipTh; Kashemi D. Rorie, PhD

**M**ajor depressive disorder (MDD) has become one of the most prevalent public health concerns worldwide due to its high rate of morbidity, recurrence, and suicide, resulting in a profound burden to both the individual and society. Depression affects approximately 350 million people worldwide—a figure that has nearly tripled in the last 10 years.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, depression is expected to become the most common cause of loss of disability-adjusted life years in the world by 2030 (TABLE 1).<sup>2</sup>

Concomitant with the profound disability that depression creates is the significant economic burden that it imposes. The estimated cost of depression in 2000 was \$83 billion, with 70% of that cost related to indirect expenses, such as workplace costs (ie, productivity loss and sick days) and suicide-related costs (FIGURE 1).<sup>3,4</sup> These data, in conjunction with increased expenditures and frequent treatment failures in MDD, reveal the need to implement health care delivery models that provide high-quality health care that promotes patient-centered outcomes, efficiency, and effective care. As outlined in the National Quality Strategy (NQS), clinical best practices and outcomes should be aligned with health care

delivery systems that reduce and/or eliminate waste.<sup>5</sup>

Among the most accessible health professionals for a host of medical conditions, primary care physicians (PCPs) are on the frontline for depression care, particularly considering that they write about 2 of every 3 antidepressant prescriptions in the United States.<sup>6</sup> However, PCPs are often so challenged by their patients' medical needs that residual symptoms of MDD may be overlooked.<sup>7</sup> The increased number of novel and emerging therapies, which potentially render safer and more effective care than traditional therapies, highlight the importance of PCPs honing their skills in the effective long-term management of patients with depression. Among the priorities of the NQS are to reduce the rate of delayed care from 14.1% to less than 10% and the lack of patient-centered decision making from 15.9% to less than 10% by 2017.<sup>5</sup> Providing PCPs with the tools to implement patient-centered, quality, effective strategies that facilitate long-term symptom remission and recovery is central to achieving these initiatives.

## Diagnosis of depression in the primary care setting

### Screening

The plurality of care for depression is provided by general medical practitioners, who see almost twice as many mental health patients as psychiatrists.<sup>8</sup> Although some mental health patients may see more than one health care provider for treatment, prevalence data indicate that general medical providers see nearly twice as many mental health patients as psychiatrists (FIGURE 2).<sup>8</sup>

While depression has been reported as the second most common chronic disorder in primary care settings,<sup>8</sup> initially it is often undiagnosed or misdiagnosed.<sup>9,10</sup> Despite this observation, screening for depression in primary care settings has been controversial.<sup>11,12</sup> In 2002 and again in 2009, the US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommended routine depression screening in primary care settings that provided staff-assisted depression care programs to help monitor follow-up; these recommendations were based on a systematic review and meta-analysis of the

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### DISCLOSURES

Dr. Gaynes discloses that he has received grant/research support from the National Institute of Mental Health and the Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research.

Dr. Jackson discloses that he is a consultant for Forest Pharmaceuticals, Inc; Merck & Co; Pamlab, Inc; Otsuka America Pharmaceutical, Inc; Sunovion Pharmaceuticals Inc; and Takeda Pharmaceutical Company Ltd. He is on the speakers bureau of Sunovion Pharmaceuticals Inc.

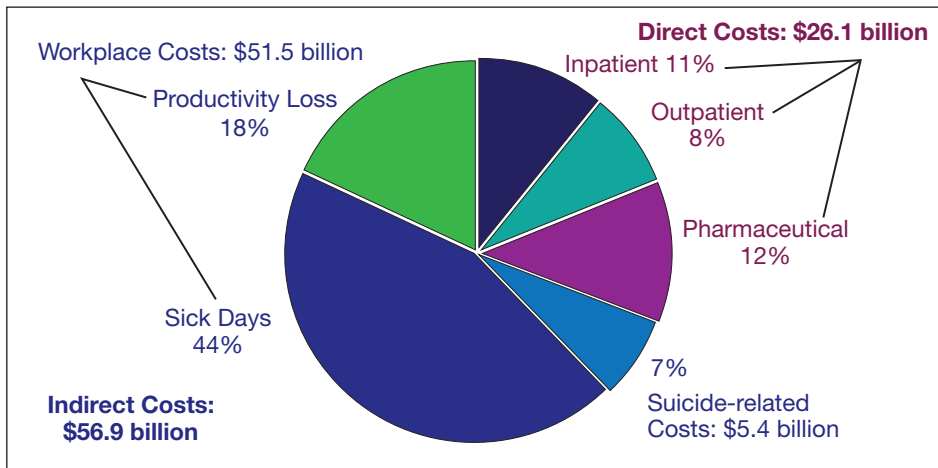
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**TABLE 1** Rankings of major depressive disorder and other diseases/injuries by their impact on disability-adjusted life years<sup>2</sup>

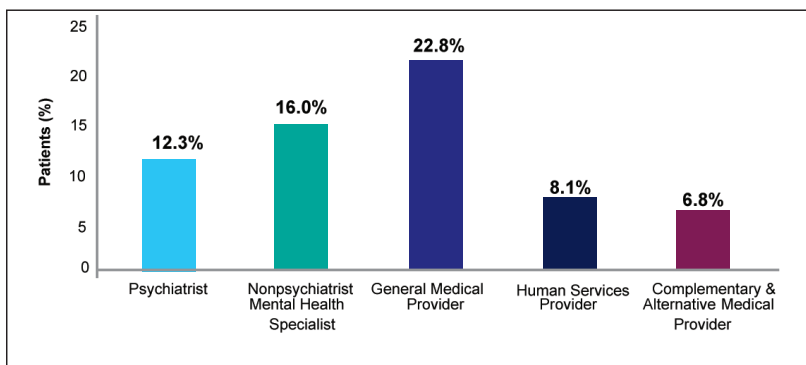
| Rank | Disease or injury: 2004          | Disease or injury: 2030               |
|------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1    | Lower respiratory infections     | Major depressive disorder             |
| 2    | Diarrheal diseases               | Ischemic heart disease                |
| 3    | Major depressive disorder        | Road traffic accidents                |
| 4    | Ischemic heart disease           | Cerebrovascular disease               |
| 5    | HIV/AIDS                         | Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease |
| 6    | Cerebrovascular disease          | Lower respiratory infections          |
| 7    | Prematurity and low birth weight | Hearing loss, adult onset             |
| 8    | Birth asphyxia and birth trauma  | Refractive errors                     |
| 9    | Road traffic accidents           | HIV/AIDS                              |
| 10   | Neonatal infections              | Diabetes                              |

AIDS, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome; HIV, human immunodeficiency virus.

**FIGURE 1** The economic burden of major depressive disorder<sup>3,4</sup>



**FIGURE 2** Proportion of mental health patients managed by different health care providers\*†<sup>8</sup>



\*Percentages represent prevalence data obtained over a 12-month period from the National Comorbidity Survey Replication.

†Treatment could be received by more than one source.

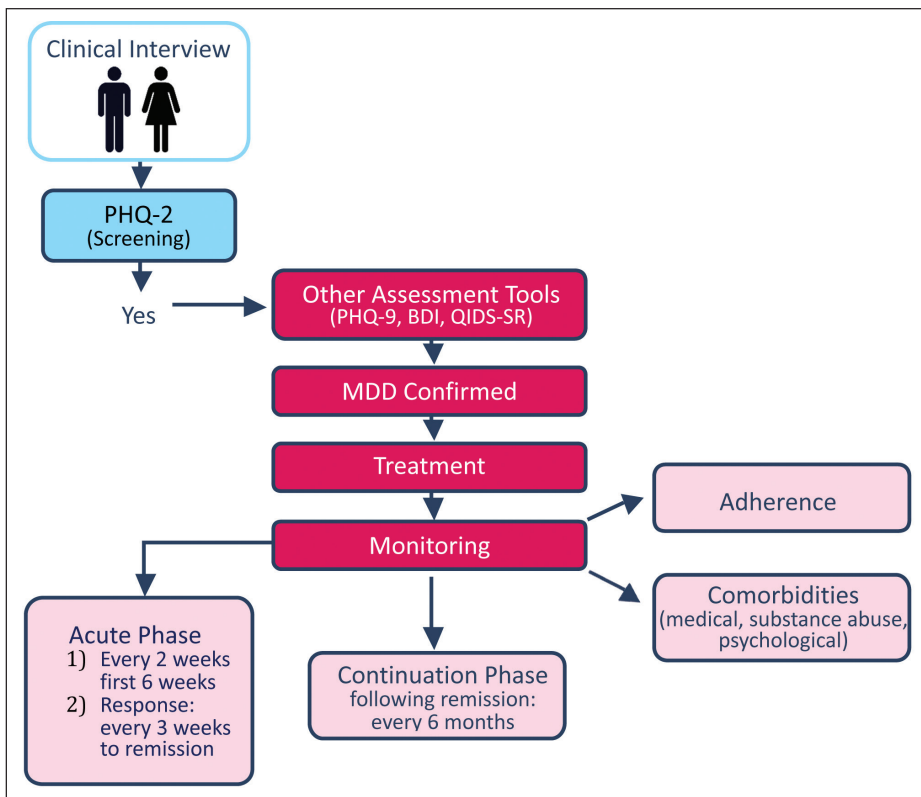
available data.<sup>13,14</sup> The USPSTF recommendations for depression screening in primary care settings are currently under review, with an update anticipated in 2015.<sup>15</sup> Despite these recommendations, other meta-analyses have concluded that there is no clinical evidence to demonstrate a benefit,<sup>16,17</sup> suggesting that depression screening could contribute to overdiagnosis and overtreatment. Of note, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has determined that evidence is adequate to support depression screening in adults for the prevention or early detection of depression and its concomitant disability.<sup>18</sup>

As shown in the flowchart created by the authors (FIGURE 3), the diagnosis of depression is a stepwise process and should begin with a clinical interview to screen for the presence of depressive symptomatology (including altered mood states, sleep disturbances, and cognitive dysfunction).<sup>19</sup> The Patient Health Questionnaire-2 (PHQ-2)<sup>20</sup> can be used to screen for frequency of depressed mood and anhedonia;

at least one of these must be present over the past 2 weeks for a diagnosis of MDD according to the criteria of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fifth edition (DSM-5).<sup>19</sup> The PHQ-2 includes the first 2 items of the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) and is intended to screen for, not diagnose, depression as a first-step approach.

SIG-E-CAPS is a useful mnemonic:

- Sleep – increased or decreased (if decreased, often early morning awakening)
- Interest – decreased
- Guilt/worthlessness
- Energy – decreased or fatigued
- Concentration/difficulty making decisions

**FIGURE 3** Stepwise management of depression

BDI, Beck Depression Inventory; MDD, major depressive disorder; PHQ, Patient Health Questionnaire; QIDS-SR, Quick Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology–Self-Report.

- Appetite and/or weight increase or decrease
- Psychomotor activity – increased or decreased
- Suicidal ideation.

Should depressive symptoms be detected via clinical interview and/or PHQ-2 screening, validated assessment tools should be used to confirm the presence and duration of depressive symptoms and establish a baseline for symptom tracking.<sup>21</sup> **TABLE 2** provides a sample of common assessment tools for depression.<sup>22</sup> It is also worth noting that there is a high rate of misdiagnosis between major depression and bipolar depression in primary care settings. Some studies have reported that up to 50% of individuals diagnosed with bipolar depression actually have MDD, while others have reported a sample in which 23% of patients currently diagnosed with MDD screened positive for bipolar disorder.<sup>23–26</sup> Subsequently, when an index of suspicion is positive for depression, clinicians should also assess whether there has been a history of mania or hypomania to rule out bipolar disorder. The Mood Disorder Questionnaire (MDQ) is widely used to screen for bipolar disorder and may be useful in ruling out bipolar depression in

patients who have positive screens for depression.<sup>27</sup>

### Diagnostic accuracy in the primary care setting

Although depression is often first seen in the primary care setting, up to 50% of individuals with depression are not diagnosed.<sup>9</sup> A likely contributing factor is that PCPs primarily focus on acute and/or chronic medical conditions seen in the primary care setting. In addition, depression is often comorbid with medical illnesses,<sup>28</sup> complicating both the recognition and effective management of the disease.

Conversely, depression can be overestimated in some clinical settings. The National Comorbidity Survey (NCS; 1990–1992) and the National Comorbidity Survey Replication (NCS-R; 2001–2003) reported that nearly half of individuals receiving treatment for mental illnesses did not meet diagnostic criteria for a mental disorder.<sup>8,29</sup> These results include patients in general

medicine, subspecialty, and other mental health settings.

Multiple competing demands, limited time and training, and complicated presentations contribute to the challenges PCPs face in identifying depression. In a meta-analysis of more than 50,000 patients pooled across 41 global studies, PCPs accurately identified depression in 47% (95% CI, 41.7% to 53%) of their patients.<sup>30</sup> In a subset of the data examining the ability of PCPs to identify depression in depressed patients as well as rule out depression in nondepressed patients, the positive predictive value was 42% (39.6% to 44.3%) and the negative predictive value was 85.8% (84.8% to 86.7%).<sup>30</sup> **FIGURE 4** provides a theoretical perspective of the diagnostic accuracy of depression in the general medical setting. In essence, it conveys the importance of not only accurately diagnosing depression, but also possessing the skills to rule out depression in patients who may present with related disorders or symptoms.<sup>30</sup>

### Treatment of depression

#### Goals of therapy

Traditionally, the goal of antidepressant therapy has been symptomatic remission. However, full symptomatic remis-

**TABLE 2** Assessment tools for depression<sup>22</sup>

| Instrument  | Number of items                | Scoring range   | Typical cut-point   |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| <b>Symptom rating scales</b>  |                                |                 |   |
| <b>Research rating scales</b>   |                                |                 |   |
| Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Screen (CESD)   | 20                             | 0–16            | 16  |
| Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS)  | 30<br>15                       | 0–30<br>0–15    | 14<br>5   |
| Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HAM-D or HDRS)*   | 17<br>21                       |                 | 8 mild<br>14 moderate<br>19 severe<br>23 very severe          |
| Montgomery-Asberg Depression Rating Scale (MADRS)*  | 10                             | 0–60            | None found  |
| <b>Clinical practice scales</b>   |                                |                 |   |
| Beck Depression Inventory (BDI)   | 21                             | 0–63            | 11 mild<br>17 borderline clinical<br>21 moderate<br>31 severe |
| Primary Care Evaluation of Mental Disorders, Mood Module (PRIME-MD) Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)                    | 9                              | 0–27            | 5 mild<br>10 moderate<br>15 moderately severe<br>20 severe    |
| Quick Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology (QIDS)<br>• QIDS-C (clinician administered)<br>• QIDS-SR (patient self-report) | 16                             | 0–27            | 6 mild<br>11 moderate<br>16 severe<br>21 very severe          |
| PRIME-MD screening items  | 2                              | 0–2             | 2   |
| Composite International Diagnostic Interview (CIDI), 2 “stem” items for depression section*                                 | 2                              | 0–2             | 2   |
| <b>Diagnostic interview tools</b>   |                                |                 |   |
| CIDI*   | Varies, depending on responses | Diagnostic code | NA  |
| PRIME-MD  | Varies, depending on responses | Diagnostic code | NA  |

\*Clinician administered, training required.

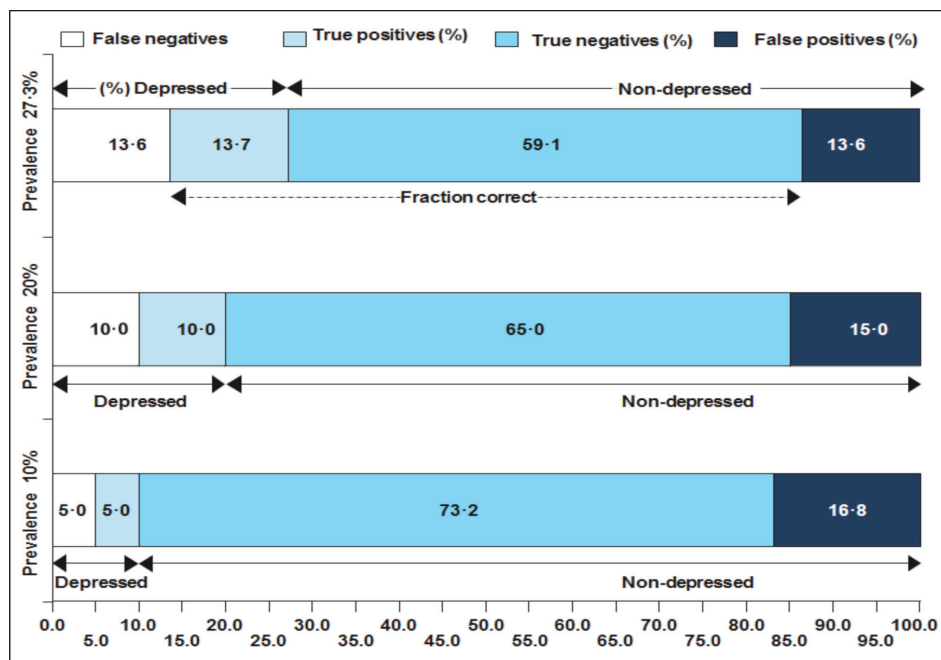
NA, not applicable.

sion and recovery of function has emerged as the optimal therapeutic goal. Nevertheless, most depressed people seeking treatment fail to receive optimal care. According to data from

the NCS-R, only 42% (95% CI, 35.9% to 47.9%) of individuals diagnosed with depression and requiring treatment actually received “adequate” care.<sup>31</sup> Of these 42%, 64% (95% CI, 55.4%

\*Adequate treatment was defined as receiving either (1) at least 4 outpatient visits with any type of physician for pharmacotherapy that included use of either an antidepressant or mood stabilizer for a minimum of 30 days or (2) at least 8 outpatient visits with any professional in the specialty mental health sector for psychotherapy lasting a mean of at least 30 minutes.<sup>31</sup>

**FIGURE 4** Real-world proportions of correct and incorrect diagnoses of depression in primary care settings<sup>30</sup>



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to 73.1%) were seen in specialty care and 41% were seen in general medical settings.<sup>31</sup> Rates of remission were nearly 33% after 12 weeks of treatment with a first antidepressant, and approximately 67% after up to 3 depression treatment strategies.<sup>32</sup>

Suboptimal treatment response, the inability to effectively treat all symptoms of depression, and potential adverse effects of available antidepressant agents are key barriers to achieving clinical remission and recovery. Subsequently, the focus of intervention has expanded beyond a mere response to therapy to address the unmet treatment needs of residual symptoms of depression (eg, cognitive dysfunction, sleep disturbances) and their impact on symptom remission and recovery.

### Response, remission, recovery

Response, remission, and recovery are terms associated with depression management, but clinically and phenomenologically they represent vastly different constructs. According to the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology task force, **response**, typically defined as a clinically meaningful degree of symptom reduction, is an insufficient outcome in depression management.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, **remission** implies that the signs and symptoms of the disease are completely absent (full remission) or nearly absent (partial remission) and functioning has returned to normal, whereas **recov-**

**ery** implies the anticipation of an extended period of remission.

The movement in mental health care to promote recovery has received support from the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health.<sup>34</sup> Recovery is increasingly thought of as not merely the remission of symptoms or the achievement of various psychosocial milestones but rather as a process and not an outcome. The multiple elements of recovery include significant improvements in depressive symptoms and relapses, life satisfaction and daily activities, and adequate or suitable function in everyday life. Despite the progression toward recovery-oriented care, this operational definition remains a work in progress.<sup>33,35</sup>

### Clinical significance of residual symptoms

Response may be the initial goal of treatment, but it is insufficient as the end goal. Remission does not imply the same symptomatic improvements as recovery but serves as a standardized way to measure symptoms that have remained at a low level for a period of time. The clinical impact of response versus remission on recovery is profound. Patients who respond to antidepressant therapy but do not remit experience persistent symptoms and impaired psychosocial functioning.<sup>36-39</sup> Data suggest significant functional impairment can also occur in partial remitters and even in remitters with residual symptoms.<sup>40,41</sup> In conjunction, functional impairment has been significantly associated with decreased likelihood of recovery from a major depressive episode.<sup>42</sup>

Residual depressive symptoms also increase the likelihood of relapse and recurrence of MDD.<sup>38,39</sup> Relapse and recurrence refer to the return of a major depressive episode; however, they differ in that **relapse** occurs *before* recovery but after remission, while **recurrence** occurs only *after* recovery.<sup>33</sup> Recurrence is common in MDD, occurring in 20% of patients within 6 months following remission.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, between 50% and 85% of patients who have an episode of MDD will experience at least one lifetime recurrence.<sup>43</sup> The persistence of residual symptoms and the attendant propensity for recurrence and relapse negatively impact the clinical course and outcomes of MDD.



**TABLE 3** Impact of not attaining remission from depression<sup>51-53</sup>

| Impact on individual    | Impact on society   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Higher risk of relapse  | Increased workplace costs (eg, productivity loss and sick days) |
| Increased suicidality   | More benefits received via welfare and disability insurance     |
| Decreased life span     | More psychiatric hospitalizations                               |
| Less symptom-free weeks | Increased medical, psychiatric, and emergency care              |

In addition to the functional consequences of residual symptoms, both physiologic and neuropathologic consequences have been reported. A meta-analysis of 143 studies revealed that patients with MDD had smaller hippocampal and frontal brain volume than did healthy controls.<sup>44</sup> In a sample of older individuals without dementia, it was likewise observed that people with MDD, relative to nondepressed controls, had more global brain atrophy ( $B = -1.25\%$ ; 95% CI,  $-2.05\%$  to  $-0.44\%$ ), including gray and white matter atrophy in most lobes in addition to the hippocampus and thalamus.<sup>45</sup>

A comparison of patients with current vs past MDD revealed significantly more global brain atrophy in those with current MDD ( $B = -1.44\%$ ; 95% CI,  $-2.26\%$  to  $-0.63\%$ ;  $P = .001$ ).<sup>45</sup> Remission also has a significant clinical impact on metabolism. Insulin sensitivity has been shown to increase in individuals who remit from depression with antidepressants.<sup>46</sup> One study revealed that insulin sensitivity was significantly lower in untreated depressed individuals compared with patients on antidepressants and those without depression,  $F(2,55) = 4.38$ ,  $P < .05$ .<sup>47</sup>

The medical morbidity and mortality of untreated depression are often underestimated with respect to those of other serious medical disorders.<sup>48</sup> Depressed patients are much more likely to have cardiovascular illness and 6 times more likely to die within 6 months of an acute myocardial infarction.<sup>49</sup> Depression carries an increased risk for many other medical conditions as well, including diabetes, stroke, cancer, epilepsy, and Parkinson's disease.<sup>48</sup> Depressed patients are also much more likely to become nonadherent with medications prescribed for other chronic conditions, inflicting an additional disease burden that is often overlooked.<sup>50</sup>

The consequences of failing to attain remission from depression are profound, impacting both the individual and

**TABLE 4** Commonly used antidepressants with traditional mechanisms of action<sup>58-60</sup>

| Agents   | Safety and efficacy of drug class  |
|--|--|
| <b>Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)</b>   |  |
| Examples: citalopram, fluoxetine, paroxetine   | Modest improvements in MDD, leaving many patients with residual symptoms<br>Adverse effects: GI adverse effects, drowsiness, nervousness, insomnia, sexual dysfunction   |
| <b>Tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs) (or first-generation serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors [SNRIs])</b> |  |
| Examples: amitriptyline, doxepin, desipramine  | Efficacy similar to SSRIs; however, significantly more adverse events<br>Adverse effects: Drowsiness, anticholinergic effects, weight gain, sexual dysfunction, orthostatic hypotension  |
| <b>Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs)</b>  |  |
| Examples: phenelzine, isocarboxazid, selegiline  | Considered especially efficacious in atypical symptoms of depression and in refractory patients, with slight efficacy advantage over TCAs<br>Adverse effects: Orthostatic hypotension, sexual dysfunction, weight gain, daytime sleepiness; hypertensive crisis with certain foods, drugs, and OTC medications |
| <b>SNRIs (second generation)</b>   |  |
| Examples: venlafaxine, duloxetine, levomilnacipran   | Theorized that enhanced norepinephrine transmission could address depressive symptoms not adequately addressed by SSRIs<br>Adverse effects: Similar to those of SSRIs, but higher risk of causing hypertension and/or tachycardia; risk of sweating, nausea, and other GI adverse effects                      |

GI, gastrointestinal; MDD, major depressive disorder; OTC, over the counter.

**TABLE 5** Antidepressants with nontraditional mechanisms of action<sup>58-60</sup>

| Agents  | Safety and efficacy of drug class   |
|---|---|
| Examples: bupropion, vilazodone, vortioxetine | <p>Bupropion inhibits both norepinephrine and dopamine; associated adverse effects include anxiety, insomnia, and tremor</p> <p>Vilazodone is a novel 5-HT1A partial agonist and serotonin reuptake inhibitor; adverse effects include nausea, diarrhea, headache, and weight gain</p> <p>Vortioxetine is a multiple serotonin modulator and uptake inhibitor; adverse effects are similar to those of SSRIs, with lower risk of sexual dysfunction</p> |

SSRIs, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors.

society (**TABLE 3**).<sup>51-53</sup> Depression carries an elevated risk of suicide and premature death.<sup>54</sup> For young adults between 15 and 20 years of age, suicide is the second leading cause of death worldwide, and in the United States, nearly 8% of high school students reported suicide attempts.<sup>55</sup> At the other end of the life spectrum, elderly men have a rate of completed suicide that is 5 to 10 times higher than the rest of the adult population.<sup>54</sup> Overall, individuals with severe mood or thought disorders have life spans that are 14 to 32 years shorter than the rest of the population despite recent efforts to improve the quality of their medical care.<sup>56</sup>

#### Management strategies: Pharmacologic

Despite the availability of a wide variety of antidepressant medications, data from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)-sponsored Sequenced Treatment Alternatives to Relieve Depression (STAR\*D) trial found that only 50% of patients with MDD responded to first-line monotherapy and only about 30% achieved remission.<sup>6</sup> Even in patients with MDD who do achieve remission, roughly half are estimated to continue to experience residual symptoms.<sup>57</sup>

**TABLE 4** lists antidepressants commonly used in clinical practice that have traditional mechanisms of action, and **TABLE 5** lists therapies with nontraditional mechanisms of action.<sup>58-60</sup> It is argued that the clinical heterogeneity of depression renders traditional antidepressants—with their selective targeting of the serotonin transporter (SERT)—suboptimal in many patients in achieving sustained remission and recovery.<sup>61-64</sup> Subsequently, there has been a plethora of data on novel depression pharmacotherapies that combine multiple simultaneous pharmacologic mechanisms in addition to SERT inhibition, including 5-HT1A agonism with SERT inhibition,<sup>65</sup> triple reuptake inhibitors with norepinephrine and dopamine reuptake inhibition with SERT inhibition,<sup>66</sup> and multimodal antidepressant activity at the G receptor mode (5-HT1A and 5-HT1B partial agonism and 5-HT7 antagonism), at the ion channel mode (5-HT3 antagonism) as well as the neurotransmitter transporter mode

(SERT inhibition).<sup>67,68</sup> These novel therapeutic approaches may facilitate symptomatic remission and recovery across a broad constellation of depressive symptoms. Moreover, the more diverse pharmacodynamics of these novel strategies may mitigate some of the treatment-emergent adverse effects typically observed with traditional antidepressants.<sup>64</sup> As adverse effects can impact not only an individual's functioning and sense of well-being but also his or her perceived value of a pharmacotherapy, therapeutic strategies with greater tolerability may help optimize adherence.<sup>69</sup> It should be noted, however, that meta-analyses have not indicated a clear clinical benefit of one antidepressant over others.<sup>70</sup>

#### Management strategies: Nonpharmacologic

Although pharmacologic therapy typically constitutes the mainstay of management for MDD, nonpharmacologic strategies are an important and viable component of comprehensive MDD care. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) guidelines suggest that the acute phase of depression management may include pharmacotherapy, psychotherapy, or other somatic therapies such as electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS), or phototherapy.<sup>71</sup> An efficacy comparison of 64 studies on ECT, rTMS, vagus nerve stimulation (VNS), and/or cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) or interpersonal therapy (IPT) showed no differences between therapies for depression severity, response rates, and remission rates, although no trial compared psychotherapy with another nonpharmacologic therapy.<sup>72</sup> Only one study in this review compared nonpharmacologic therapy (ECT) to pharmacotherapy (paroxetine); the nonpharmacologic therapy significantly improved depression severity (9 points on the Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression [HAM-D],  $P=.001$ ) and treatment response (71.4% ECT vs 27.8% paroxetine,  $P=.006$ ).<sup>72</sup>

**TABLE 6** describes various nonpharmacologic therapies and their associated adverse effects and contraindications.<sup>72</sup>

Prior psychotherapy has been shown to have an enduring effect that is at least as efficacious as maintenance with an

**TABLE 6** Nonpharmacologic therapies for depression<sup>72</sup>

| Intervention                 | Description   | Adverse effects/contraindications   |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| ECT                          | Passing an electric current through the brain after administering anesthetic and muscle relaxants to produce a convulsion | Potential risks include seizure and adverse cognitive effects, in addition to the risk of adverse effects from anesthesia<br>There is an increased risk of complications in patients with unstable cardiac disease, ischemia, arrhythmias, hemorrhage, or increased intracranial pressure                         |
| rTMS                         | Focal magnetic stimulation through the scalp without the use of anesthesia  | Potential adverse effects include mild headaches, scalp pain, syncope, and transient hearing changes<br>Should not be used in patients with a high risk of seizure or patients who have metal objects anywhere in the body (such as cardiac pacemakers, medication pumps, and cochlear implants) except the mouth |
| VNS                          | Surgically implanted electrodes around the left vagus nerve to modulate mood and control seizures                         | Potential adverse effects include voice alteration, cough, neck pain, paresthesia, and dyspnea<br>Should not be used in patients with bilateral or left cervical vagotomy<br>Patients with VNS implants should not receive shortwave diathermy, microwave diathermy, or ultrasound diathermy                      |
| Psychotherapies (CBT or IPT) | Psychotherapy to identify negative depressogenic cognitions or interpersonal behaviors                                    | CBT and IPT do not have any serious risks or adverse effects associated with them<br>Should not be used in patients with cognitive disorders, cognitive impairment, or limited cognitive functioning  |
| Exercise                     | Can be aerobic or anaerobic physical activity   | Considerations should be made for exercise intensity and any comorbid medical conditions  |

CBT, cognitive-behavioral therapy; ECT, electroconvulsive therapy; IPT, interpersonal therapy; rTMS, repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation; VNS, vagus nerve stimulation.

antidepressant.<sup>73</sup> The enduring effects of psychotherapy were also observed in a study in which psychotherapy reduced the risk of relapse relative to placebo ( $X^2=6.01$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $P=.01$ ), as did maintenance antidepressant monotherapy ( $X^2=4.55$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $P=.03$ ) in unstable remitters.<sup>74</sup>

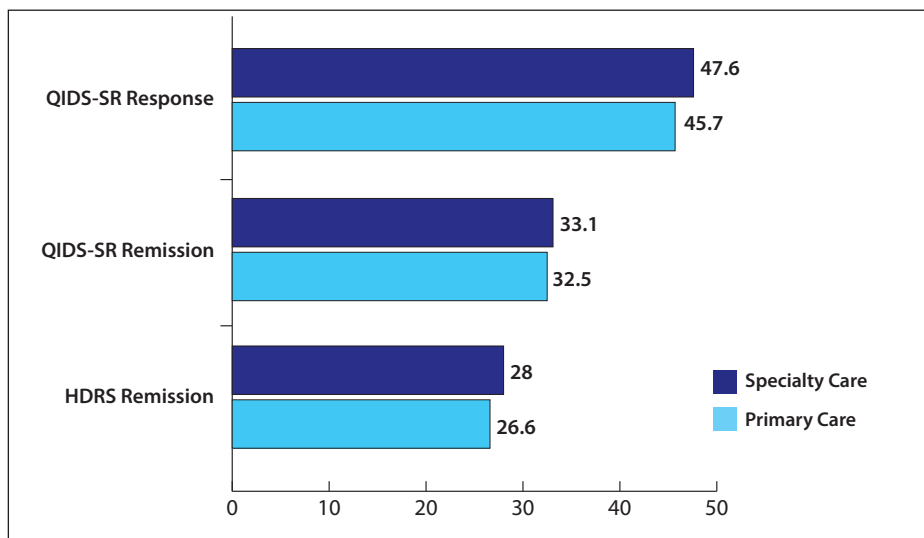
Exercise is another nonpharmacologic intervention that has demonstrated some benefit in reducing depressive symptoms. A meta-analysis of 35 randomized clinical trials revealed a moderate clinical effect of exercise on depression (standardized mean difference [SMD] =  $-0.62$ , 95% CI,  $-0.81$  to  $-0.42$ ).<sup>75</sup> In a prospective, randomized controlled trial of individuals with depression exercising at home or in a supervised group, remission rates for exercise were comparable to those of individuals receiving antidepressant medication (supervised exercise, 45%; home-based exercise, 40%; medication, 47%; placebo, 31%;  $P=.057$ ).<sup>76</sup> Exercise as an adjunctive therapy with antidepressants has also demonstrated therapeutic efficacy in depression. In a comparison of higher- versus lower-dose exercise groups, 12-week remission rates were higher in the high-level group (28.3% vs 15.5%;  $P<.06$ ).<sup>77</sup>

Additional nonpharmacologic therapies that have shown some benefit in symptom reduction in depression include

“natural” or herbal approaches, such as St. John’s wort, S-adenosyl methionine (SAMe), and omega-3 fatty acids, bibliotherapy (a form of guided self-help), and behavioral activation. See Velehorsch (2014) for a complete review.<sup>78</sup>

### Considerations for treatment selection and modification

Treatment selection for MDD should include consideration of the patient’s preference, prior positive response to therapy, response in other family members, short- and long-term adverse events, interaction with nonpsychiatric medication, as well as concurrent medical and/or psychiatric disorders.<sup>60,70</sup> Treatment modification may be necessary in patients whose symptoms fail to remit with initial therapy. Modification may involve escalating the dose (to the maximum safe therapeutic dose), augmenting therapy, or switching agents. Augmenting current therapy can maintain the partial therapeutic benefit from initial therapy and avoid negative effects associated with discontinuation. Augmenting with atypical antipsychotics, the most studied augmentation strategy, has the potential to cause adverse effects, including metabolic changes and extrapyramidal symptoms.<sup>79,80</sup> The addition of lithium

**FIGURE 5** Impact of measurement-based care on depression outcomes in primary care vs specialty care settings<sup>84</sup>

HDRS, Hamilton Depression Rating Scale; QIDS-SR, Quick Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology–Self-Report.

demonstrated efficacy with tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs) but not more novel therapies.<sup>79,80</sup> It is important to consider the risk of drug-drug interactions and nonadherence when implementing augmentation strategies for depression.<sup>80-82</sup>

If a patient shows partial or no response to current therapy, clinicians may decide to switch to another agent within the same drug class (eg, a serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor [SNRI] to an SNRI) or to a drug class with a different mechanism of action (eg, a TCA to a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor [SSRI]). Some benefits are associated with switching as opposed to augmenting depression therapy, including potentially lower costs and risks of adverse effects.<sup>80</sup> However, clinicians must be vigilant in noting symptoms of discontinuation as the result of abrupt cessation of medication.<sup>80,83</sup>

### Measurement-based care for MDD

Measurement-based care (MBC) is the systematic, quantitative assessment of symptoms in patients with MDD. To enhance clinical judgment, APA treatment guidelines recommend the regular and systematic evaluation of illness course and treatment impact (every 4 to 8 weeks) using standardized tools to assess depressive symptoms.<sup>71</sup> Use of MBC can facilitate detection of unresolved symptoms, adequacy of treatment response, and adherence to prescribed therapy. Moreover, the use of MBC has been shown to enable PCPs to render comparable quality of care and clinical outcomes as those achieved in specialty care settings (FIGURE 5).<sup>84</sup>

However, clinicians are not using MBC with the indicated frequency. Electronic records from a large integrated health system of 84,418 patients (with 207,265 completed PHQ-9s) revealed that only 30% of patients completing a baseline PHQ-9 completed more than one subsequent PHQ-9, despite clinicians being advised to administer the PHQ-9 at every visit for depression treatment.<sup>85</sup> Notably, 45% of the PHQ-9s were administered by specialty mental health care providers while 54% were administered by PCPs.

The routine use of MBC to assess symptoms and adverse effects using standardized tools—with guidance at critical decision points relative to how and when to modify treatment—provides a flex-

ible therapeutic strategy to ensure the delivery of safe, effective antidepressant care.<sup>84</sup> This approach also facilitates the use of a more comprehensive, yet less complicated, decision support system.<sup>86</sup> An essential component of MBC is the use of staff to closely monitor response and manage care.<sup>87-91</sup> In conjunction, MBC further involves the use of critical decision points wherein—at specified scheduled times—the clinician can evaluate the need for treatment modification based on time on medication, total depressive severity score, and adverse effect tolerability.<sup>84</sup> Collectively, these key features have been demonstrated feasible in a busy, real-world primary care setting.<sup>92</sup>

### Monitoring depressive symptoms

Despite the availability of numerous diverse antidepressant pharmacotherapies for MDD, response and remission rates, particularly following adequate drug trials, remain disappointing.<sup>7,91,93</sup> It is therefore critical for clinicians to monitor for residual depressive symptoms as well as treatment effectiveness so they can determine when to adjust, switch, or augment therapy. Evidence demonstrates that regular patient symptom monitoring improves clinical outcomes in depression management in the primary care setting, including greater adherence to treatment.<sup>94,95</sup> APA guidelines recommend assessing treatment response every 4 to 8 weeks.<sup>21</sup> Using an MBC model, however, others have suggested more aggressive monitoring, particularly in the acute phase of treatment. That is, depressive symptoms should be assessed every 2 weeks for the first 6 weeks of treatment, followed



by every 3 weeks until remission or an adequate treatment response is achieved.<sup>96</sup> Following remission (continuation phase), assessment should occur every 3 months for prevention of relapse and recurrence.<sup>97</sup>

### Managing comorbidities

Depression is common in patients with chronic medical conditions and may have an adverse impact on disease course, resulting in decreased quality of life, increased functional impairments, and increased mortality.<sup>98</sup> Depression comorbid with chronic illness significantly reduces health-related quality of life relative to depression with no chronic illness.<sup>99</sup> Depression comorbid with chronic medical conditions is also associated with increased health care utilization, disability, and work absenteeism relative to chronic medical illness without depression, even when controlling for the burden of a chronic medical condition.<sup>100</sup>

A meta-analysis examining the correlation between depression care and clinical outcomes of chronic medical conditions confirmed the effectiveness of collaborative care interventions for managing depression in the primary care setting.<sup>101</sup> Individuals with depression and one or more chronic medical conditions who received collaborative care achieved greater improvement in depression symptoms, response, remission, and depression-free days, as well as greater quality of life and satisfaction with care, than did controls.<sup>101</sup>

### Monitoring treatment adverse effects

Adverse events often impair patient adherence to treatment. Common adverse events of antidepressant therapy include nausea, insomnia, dizziness, headache, sexual dysfunction, and weight gain.<sup>102</sup> Researchers conducting a meta-analysis of effectiveness of interventions to improve adherence to antidepressant therapy observed that collaborative care interventions demonstrated significant improvements in adherence during both the acute and continuation phase and improved clinical outcomes.<sup>103</sup> Education strategies alone did not demonstrate significant improvement, an outcome supported by another meta-analysis.<sup>104</sup> Clinicians should implement systematic strategies to monitor for treatment-related adverse effects and adjust therapy accordingly as soon as possible.

### Monitoring treatment adherence

People with mental illness are often dissatisfied with the quality of care they receive. A survey by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) reported that only about one-third (35%) of adults living with depression are very/extremely satisfied with their current treatment, while caregivers reported that only 20% of depressed individuals for whom they care are satisfied with their current treatment.<sup>105</sup> Adherence to

antidepressant therapy is a critical component of depression management. However, if patients are not satisfied with their prescribed therapy, they are not likely to remain adherent. Rates of nonadherence to antidepressant therapy have been reported as high as 28% in the first 4 weeks of therapy and 44% to 52% after 3 months.<sup>106</sup> Patients have indicated a desire to be more involved in their mental health treatment decisions and have indicated preferences for therapeutic strategies, with an emphasis on recovery as opposed to an amelioration of symptoms.<sup>107,108</sup> Developing treatment strategies that address patient needs and preferences is a critical component of MDD care and may facilitate treatment adherence.

### Conclusion

Major depression is a complex disorder that is often underdiagnosed and undertreated. The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health report highlighted the extensive barriers for patients in the mental health system and emphasized the role of collaborative relationships in achieving wellness and recovery.<sup>109</sup> As recovery and remission, not mere response, are the optimal therapeutic goals, clinicians should incorporate metrics to assist in the recognition and management of patients with MDD and use pharmacologic and nonpharmacologic therapies within a collaborative treatment plan to help patients achieve maximally beneficial outcomes. ●

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