

Introduction

Focus on Primary Care Management of Depression

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The third meeting of the International Consensus Group on Depression and Anxiety was held in Charleston, S.C., in October 1998, and took as its subject the management of depression in primary care. There is a considerable literature on the prevalence, treatment strategies, and disability associated with major depression, yet in the primary care setting, there has not been an associated increase in presentation rate, recognition rate, or the prescription of appropriate treatment for an adequate period of time. Treatment guidelines have been produced by a number of organizations, however, they are not universally accepted or implemented. We as a consensus group, rather than duplicating effort in the area of producing new guidelines, have considered the reasons behind the lack of progress in the management of depression in primary care.

By bringing together a group of experts who have had experience in driving through initiatives aimed at improving the management of depression, we were able to focus on the barriers that still exist to receiving appropriate treatment for this most disabling of disorders. The complex relationship between primary care and psychiatry and the issue of referral were discussed, taking cognizance of inter-country variations in health service provision. During the course of our discussions, we highlighted training needs and the nature of the skills that all primary care physicians require if they are to more accurately diagnose and treat depression in their clinics.

As with the other supplements for this meeting series, you will find the review papers presented and discussed during our closed meeting. These will allow you to follow our deliberations and consider how we formed our consensus views.

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