

ACPM recommends primary care have systems in place for screening and treating depression

6 October 2009

The American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM) supports the recommendations of the US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) that primary care providers should screen all adults for depression, and further recommends that all primary care providers should have systems in place to ensure the accurate diagnosis and treatment of this condition. The earliest and best opportunities to identify depression are in the clinics of primary care providers and all primary care practices should have such systems of care in place.

According to Dr. Michael T. Compton, one of the lead authors of ACPM's recommendation, "Depressive disorders are common in primary care settings and are associated with substantial morbidity and disability for individuals, as well as direct and indirect costs to society. Yet, [depression](#) is a highly treatable condition, and the goal of treatment is complete recovery. We believe that all primary care providers should be equipped to screen for depression and to assure timely and adequate treatment, either in their own practices or through an established system of referral to mental health professionals."

Depression is a potentially life-threatening disorder that affects approximately 14.8 million Americans 18 years of age and older in a given year. Depression also affects many people younger than age 18. The STAR*D (Sequenced Treatment Alternatives to Relieve Depression) study found that nearly 40% had their first depressive episode before the age of 18.

According to Dr. Mark B. Johnson, President of ACPM, "Depression is a major concern in the United States that leads to devastating consequences in many families. ACPM will continue to monitor emerging evidence on ways to

prevent, screen for and treat this disease."

More information: ACPM's practice position statement on screening adults for depression appears in the October 2009 issue of the *Journal of Family Practice*. The statement can be viewed at www.acpm.org/pol_positionstate.htm.

Source: American College of Preventive Medicine

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