



HEALTH AWARENESS

Depression: Not A Natural Part Of Aging

(NAPSA)—Scientists are working on ways to help older Americans deal with depression. Depression affects more than six million Americans age 65 and over. It is not, however, a normal part of the aging process. It is a medical condition that can be successfully managed. Special attention to treatment is important since many older patients are prescribed multiple medications, which may interact with antidepressants.

To meet the special needs of older Americans with depression, the first-ever *Expert Consensus Guidelines* solely for the treatment of geriatric depression were recently published in the medical journal *Postgraduate Medicine*. The report, entitled "Pharmacotherapy of Depressive Disorders in Older Patients," is based on a detailed survey of 50 of the country's leading experts specializing in geriatric depression.

The *Guidelines* indicate that selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are the most appropriate antidepressants to use in the treatment of all types of geriatric depression. They specifically identify Celexa (citalopram HBr) as the first choice SSRI for the treatment of depression in older people. In addition, 96 percent of the expert panel members said Celexa should be the first-line therapy for older depressed patients with and without dementia. Celexa has a favorable drug interaction and side effect profile.

"Up until the development of *Guidelines*, physicians had to rely on clinical studies that do not quite address the complexity of the care of geriatric patients," said George S. Alexopoulos, MD, Professor of Psychiatry at Weill Medical College of Cornell University, Director of the Cornell Institute of



Depression is common among older Americans, and is usually related to medical illness. Fortunately, treatments are available.

Geriatric Psychiatry and senior investigator of the study that led to the development of the *Guidelines*. "The *Guidelines* answer clinical questions that provide clinicians with information about how to approach the specific care of geriatric patients."

Adults over the age of 65 are the fastest-growing segment of the population, and up to one-quarter are at serious risk for developing clinical depression.

The symptoms of clinical depression in older adults can vary greatly and often interfere with the ability to function normally for a prolonged time. They may include:

- Persistent sadness lasting two or more weeks
- Feeling slowed-down;
- Withdrawing from regular social activities;
- Excessive worries about finances and health problems;
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating; and
- Feeling worthless or helpless.

For additional information on depression in older people, visit www.celexa.com.