

# SEE YOUR DOCTOR

## National Depression Survey Reveals Gap in Awareness of Treatment Goals

(NAPSA)—Results of a new national survey reveal a disparity between what people with depression say they know about their illness and how they manage it. Although 91 percent of those surveyed say it is very important to take their antidepressant medication exactly as prescribed, at some point approximately 40 percent stopped taking their medication without the advice of their health care professional because they personally believed they were no longer experiencing symptoms of depression. These insights come from an online survey of 1,086 people with depression sponsored by NAMI (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill) and funded by Wyeth Pharmaceuticals.

"These findings are of great concern because people who prematurely discontinue antidepressant therapy are much more likely to experience another episode," said Ken Duckworth, M.D., Medical Director of NAMI, the nation's voice on mental illness. "If patients are unsatisfied with their treatment or believe they no longer need medication because their symptoms are improving, they may stop treatment too early and slip back into the cycle of depression. That's why it is so important that people with depression have the appropriate support, education and resources they need to achieve success."

People with depression who are well informed about the illness stand a much better chance of achieving the treatment goals of having little or no symptoms. Yet the results of this survey suggest that there are gaps in awareness

### SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

#### People with depression need more information about the illness.

- Only 53 percent of respondents say they are well informed about depression and the prescription medications that are available to treat the condition.
- Only 22 percent of those surveyed have ever been told that it is possible to achieve a state of having little or no symptoms of depression.
- Less than 25 percent of survey respondents are aware of the difference between a partial and full response to medication.

#### There is a need for enhanced patient/physician communication.

- Approximately 70 percent of respondents report that they initiated the conversation with their health care provider about the symptoms of depression they were experiencing.
- Approximately 40 percent of respondents stopped taking their medication at some point without the advice of their health care professional because they personally believed they were no longer experiencing symptoms of depression.
- While the majority of respondents report that they have experienced six or more episodes of depression in their lifetime, only 34 percent of people with depression have ever discussed their risk of relapse with their physician.

#### Access to a variety of treatment options is critical for people with depression.

Because people respond differently to medication, it is important that people with depression have access to a variety of effective treatment options.

- Only 25 percent of survey respondents receive talk therapy or counseling.
- The majority have tried, on average, at least four medications during their treatment.

that it is possible to achieve a state of having little or no symptoms of depression. In addition, less than 25 percent are aware of the difference between a partial and full response to medication. And while the majority of respondents report that they have experienced six or more episodes of depression in their lifetime, only 34 percent of people with depression have ever discussed their risk of relapse with their physician.

These findings are important because clinical research shows that the longer people with depression experience symptoms, the less likely they are to achieve their treatment goals. In fact, those who experience one episode of depression have a 50 percent chance of relapse, while those who continue to experience subsequent episodes have up to a 90 percent chance of relapse.

"As a physician, I know that lack of awareness of treatment goals and low expectations can undermine treatment, resulting in people with depression continuing to experience symptoms or relapse," says Dr. Duckworth. "The majority of people with depression can achieve success with medication, talk therapy or a combination of both."

Depression is one of the most prevalent mental health conditions in the United States, affecting nearly 19 million American adults each year. People with depression can learn more about their illness and how to manage symptoms through organizations such as NAMI, which advocates for expanded access to information, services and treatment.

