



Topic Brief: Treatment for Depression

Date: 10/19/2021

Nomination Number: 0959

Purpose: This document summarizes the information addressing a nomination submitted on August 23, 2021 through the Effective Health Care Website. This information was used to inform the Evidence-based Practice Center (EPC) Program decisions about whether to produce an evidence report on the topic, and if so, what type of evidence report would be most suitable.

Issue: The nominator for this topic is a patient who has had difficulty finding relief from symptoms of depression and seeks guidance regarding treatment options.

Program Decision:

This topic nomination addresses an important issue, however, as it is a request for medical advice, it falls outside of the scope of the EPC Program's activities. The "Related Resources" section below contains links to resources for those suffering from mental illnesses, which may be of use to the nominator.

Background

Depression is an illness that is characterized by symptoms such as depressed mood, anhedonia (lack of pleasure), and thoughts of suicide.¹ In 2019, an estimated 7.8 percent of all adults in the United States had at least one major depressive episode.² Factors such as an individual's brain chemistry, genetics, personality, and environmental exposures may contribute to the etiology of this illness.¹

Treatments for depression may include medications and/or psychotherapy.¹ When depression is not responsive to a trial of antidepressants, it may be referred to as "treatment-resistant depression."³ Approximately one third of people with depression experience this form of non-responsive depression.⁴ The 2019 American Psychological Association guideline reports that combined treatment of psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy is usually recommended in cases of treatment-resistant depression.⁵ Additionally, treatment with ketamine and esketamine,⁶ electroconvulsive therapy,⁷ and add-on antidepressants or antipsychotics to primary antidepressants⁸ have been and/or are being investigated.

Assessment Methods

We assessed nomination for priority for a systematic review or other AHRQ EHC report with a hierarchical process using established selection criteria. Assessment of each criteria determined the need to evaluate the next one.

1. Determine the *appropriateness* of the nominated topic for inclusion in the EHC program.
2. Establish the overall *importance* of a potential topic as representing a health or healthcare issue in the United States.
3. Determine the *desirability of new evidence review* by examining whether a new systematic review or other AHRQ product would be duplicative.

4. Assess the *potential impact* a new systematic review or other AHRQ product.
5. Assess whether the *current state of the evidence* allows for a systematic review or other AHRQ product (feasibility).
6. Determine the *potential value* of a new systematic review or other AHRQ product.

Summary of Selection Criteria Assessment

We assessed the nomination for appropriateness. Because the nomination is a request for medical advice rather than for an evidence product, it did not meet the EPC Program's criteria for appropriateness.

Related Resources

Please see below links to resources for those suffering from depression and other mental health issues:

- <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/families>

References

1. What is Depression? American Psychiatric Association. doi: <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/what-is-depression>.
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