



October 1, 2007

Dear Health Care Professional:

As you know, late-life depression is a serious illness that can exacerbate existing medical conditions and even increase a person's risk of death. Each year, approximately six percent of Americans aged 65 and older have a diagnosable depressive illness. That six percent translates to two million people. The good news is that depression can be treated successfully—either with medication, psychotherapy, or both—75 percent of the time.

The Geriatric Mental Health Foundation (GMHF) will launch a local advertising campaign in October to increase awareness about late-life depression and to encourage those who may be depressed to seek treatment. The official launch event will be held on October 10th, at 9 a.m., at the Radisson Plaza Lord Baltimore Hotel, at 20 W. Baltimore Street.

Established by the American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry, GMHF is the only foundation solely devoted to mental health and aging. We recognize that the vast majority of those living with depression are diagnosed and treated by their primary care physicians and other health care professionals, so we wanted to be sure that you knew about our efforts which may impact you or your patients. We are enclosing a campaign brochure for your information. If you would like additional copies of the brochure, please send an email message to Baltimore@GMHFonline.org or fax your request to 301-654-4137.

In the older population depression can be difficult to recognize for many reasons, including co-existing illness and often vague symptoms such as difficulty sleeping, irritability, or eating issues. In addition, many older people wrongly assume that depression is a normal part of aging. For your convenience, we have obtained reprints of the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9). You can access this instrument through our Web site at www.treatmenthelps.org or by writing to Baltimore@GMHFonline.org.

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of all of your patients.

Sincerely,

Chris deVries
Executive Director

Enclosure