



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 Tuesday, October 16th, at 9 a.m., at the Renaissance Nashville Hotel, at 611 Commerce 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, 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 Nashville@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 Nashville@GMHFonline.org

We will be hosting an educational dinner to discuss the diagnosis and treatment of late-life depression on Tuesday, October 16th, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m., at the Renaissance Nashville Hotel. Our presenters will be Martha Bruce, Ph.D., Cornell University, and Josepha Cheong, M.D., University of Florida. CME for physicians and CE for nurses will be available for this educational course. Please write to Nashville@GMHFonline.org to make your reservation. Seating is limited; we can only accommodate the first 40 respondents.

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

Sincerely,

Chris deVries
Executive Director

Enclosure