

Depression in the Elderly

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Important Points to Remember in Geriatric Depression

- Common and treatable
- Under-diagnosed and under-treated
- >60% of elderly depressives are inappropriately treated
- Up to 25% of nursing home patients have depression
- Depression is less common in elderly living at home
- **Depression is not a normal response to aging**
- Depression commonly coexists with many medical illnesses and can be caused by medical illnesses, dementia and/or drugs
- The elderly often lack social/support systems
- The elderly frequently exhibit irritability, anxiety, cognitive disturbances and somatic complaints
- The elderly represent 12% of population but 25% of suicides
- **Education of the elderly patient and family may be most important in the successful treatment of depression**
- Depression should be vigorously treated
- The elderly may be very sensitive to side effects of medications
- **No single agent is best for all patients**
- **ECT may be a life-saving treatment of choice for severe depression in treatment-resistant or medically-compromised patients**
- **The combination of medication with psychotherapy and social/spiritual support may be the optimal treatment approach for many depressions**