



Depression

As part of a comprehensive research agenda aimed at advancing the care of veterans with depression, VA researchers are developing, testing, and implementing new models of primary care; studying ways to improve outcomes among veterans with both depression and diabetes; investigating the benefits of cognitive behavioral therapy and new drug treatments; and evaluating the risk of depression among veterans recovering from stroke.

Examples of VA research advances

- **Research to assist the most vulnerable**—Depression often develops in conjunction with other chronic medical problems. Therefore, some studies are strategically targeting veterans who experience depression along with conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, cardiovascular disease, or chronic pain. A further example is research focused on veterans with hepatitis C who develop depression as a result of their interferon treatment. VA researchers are seeking ways to ease depression in these patients so they can receive the most effective hepatitis C treatment.
- **Translating Initiatives for Depression into Effective Solutions (TIDES)**—TIDES is a model of care for veterans with depression that involves collaboration between primary care providers and mental health specialists with support from a depression-care manager. The implementation of TIDES has yielded impressive results at demonstration clinics in three VA regions, with 8 of 10 depressed veterans being treated effectively in primary care without the need for referrals to additional specialists. Patients' compliance with medication and follow-up visits improved dramatically.
- **Substance abuse and depression care**—Investigators with VA's Quality Enhancement Research Initiative have begun a project to expand the use of cognitive behavioral therapy to treat depression in veterans enrolled in substance-abuse treatment programs.

Facts About Depression

Major depressive disorder (MDD) is one of the most common and costly of mental disorders. Depression costs the U.S. an estimated \$66 billion per year, which includes both direct (i.e., medical care) and indirect (e.g., lost productivity) costs. Veterans with depression account for slightly more than 14 percent of total VA health care costs. While there are effective pharmacologic treatments and psychotherapies for MDD, studies show that depression is under-diagnosed. An untreated episode of depression may last several months, but most people with depression experience repeated episodes over their lifetime.

