

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 23, 2006

CONTACT:
Julie Totten
Phone: (781) 890-0220
Email: north@familyaware.org

NEW ONLINE MOOD QUESTIONNAIRE SCREENS FOR DEPRESSION AND BIPOLAR DISORDER

Families for Depression Awareness Introduces Combined Screening Tool

WALTHAM, MA –Families for Depression Awareness, a national nonprofit organization, has launched an innovative screening tool on its web site called the Mood Questionnaire, which people can take anonymously and confidentially to find out if they might have a mood disorder. About 21 million Americans suffer from depression and bipolar disorder, but only 50% seek treatment, usually because they are unaware that they have a mood disorder. The questionnaire is available at www.familyaware.org.

“The Mood Questionnaire is unique because it screens for both depression and bipolar disorder in one test,” says Julie Totten, president and founder of Families for Depression Awareness. “Other online screening tools test just for depression or require the user to decide whether they want to take a depression or a bipolar disorder test, even though they don’t know what they are suffering from.”

It is important to test for both depression and bipolar disorder upfront because people who really have bipolar disorder are often misdiagnosed with depression. “Bipolar disorder is commonly not detected, even by clinicians,” explains Scott Aaronson, MD, Director of Clinical Research Programs for Sheppard Pratt Health System, “People with bipolar disorder often don’t realize they have it, because they only feel bad when they are depressed, not manic. It takes an average of 8 years for someone with bipolar disorder to be properly diagnosed and during that time they suffer needlessly and can become suicidal. People really need to be screened in the beginning for both depression and bipolar disorder.”

Bipolar disorder usually requires treatment with a mood stabilizer, a different class of medication than antidepressants. “People with bipolar disorder almost always need to take a mood stabilizer. In fact, antidepressants alone can make bipolar disorder worse,” says Beth Murphy, MD, Attending Psychiatrist, McLean Hospital. “The Mood Questionnaire will help people recognize symptoms that may indicate bipolar disorder or depression, so that they can talk with their doctor and get the right diagnosis and treatment.”

The Mood Questionnaire is based on two widely distributed and tested screening tools: the PHQ9 for depression and MDQ for bipolar disorder. The MDQ is in the public domain. PHQ9 is a copyright of © 1999 Pfizer Inc. After users take the test, they can print out their results to show a clinician for a complete evaluation. Users are referred to sources of medical help, including sites where clinicians offer free testing for mood disorders.

To take the Mood Questionnaire, visit www.familyaware.org.

To arrange a media interview email north@familyaware.org, or call (781) 890-0220.

About Families for Depression Awareness

Families for Depression Awareness is a national nonprofit organization helping families recognize and cope with depressive disorders. The organization provides education, outreach and advocacy to support families and is comprised of families who have lost a family member to suicide or have watched a loved one suffer with depression, with little knowledge about how to help. For more information please go to www.familyaware.org.

###