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## **FAMILIES FOR DEPRESSION AWARENESS LAUNCHES ADULT DEPRESSION WELLNESS GUIDE NATIONWIDE**

*First-Ever Depression Wellness Guide for Families; Developed in Advance of FDA Hearings on Adult Antidepressant Use and Suicide Risks*

WALTHAM, Mass. (December 7, 2006)—Families for Depression Awareness, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping families recognize and cope with depressive disorders, today announced the nationwide release of its Depression Wellness Guide for adults, following an extensive pilot study. This is the first simple, practical tool that helps adults with depression monitor treatment—in conjunction with their clinician, family and friends. The educational booklet consists of daily tools, including diaries and worksheets, to track symptom progress.

The Depression Wellness Guide for adults was created in response to the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) advisory that patients, family members and clinicians monitor antidepressant treatment together. Treatment monitoring will likely be an important issue in the FDA's December 13 hearing on adult antidepressant use and suicide risks. Families for Depression Awareness believes firmly that family and friends play an essential role in effective treatment and treatment should be monitored.

"To-date, FDA guidance is clear—close monitoring of antidepressant treatment and depression symptoms is necessary," said Julie Totten, president of Families for Depression Awareness. "Unfortunately, treatment monitoring is not the norm, and most patients do not have a systematic framework to guide them. The Depression Wellness Guide is the first simple, practical tool bridging the gap between embracing the FDA's guidance and closely following it."

The guide is designed for adults with major depression or dysthymia. It was developed by a clinical review committee. The pilot study was led by Carol Glod, Ph.D, associate professor of Nursing at Northeastern University Bouve College of Health Sciences, director of Developmental Studies at McLean Hospital, and lecturer in Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

In the pilot study since October 2005, the Adult Depression Wellness Guide has helped more than 600 families monitor their illness and its treatment. The Guide provides a three-step approach to monitoring treatment:

- **Define Wellness:** A Wellness Worksheet helps define what is well and not well, treatment goals, and signs and life events that families can identify for when depression gets worse.
- **Record Daily:** In the monitoring diary, mood, medications, wellness and other items can be recorded.
- **Keep a Journal:** This helps those affected gain insight into their thoughts and feelings.

"My therapist always asked 'How have you been?'" said Mary Dick, who used the Depression Wellness Guide. "I never knew how to answer and it was easy to say I was awful. But, the guide showed I was actually improving. I also liked the fact I could monitor what was important to me – my medication schedule, daily accomplishments, exercise, and appetite."

### **Pilot Study Results**

Participants were asked to complete a pre-survey, use the Guide for a month and then fill out a post-survey on their experience. The pilot evaluation focuses on three areas: educational effectiveness, adherence to treatment (compliance), and usefulness. Dr. Glod led the study.

Most participants used the Depression Wellness Guide every day or once or twice a week. Overall, they rated the Guide in the top satisfaction rankings. The Guide was most helpful in terms of understanding and monitoring treatment and helping patients better communicate with their families and clinicians. Additional benefits include help in sticking with a medication regimen and more regular visits to clinicians.

“Depression is usually a treatable illness, but it requires the active participation of patients and their families to help clinicians provide the best care,” said Dr. Glod. “The Depression Wellness Guide pilot study indicates that the guide can help people closely monitor how they are doing and stay with treatment.”

### **Depression: Important Issues**

Depression is a real medical condition that requires treatment, whether that is medication, psychotherapy or other appropriate therapies. It can take multiple tries to find the most helpful antidepressant, according to STAR\*D, the nation’s largest depression treatment study sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health. Depression is also the leading cause of suicide. Monitoring helps patients find the most appropriate treatment.

### **Availability**

The Depression Wellness Guide is available immediately. Interested families can download a free electronic version from [www.familyaware.org](http://www.familyaware.org) or call 781-890-0220 to order a hard-copy guide for \$6.95.

### **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](http://www.familyaware.org).

*Multiple patients and clinicians are available to be interviewed by the press. Please contact us to set up an interview.*

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