

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**FAMILIES FOR DEPRESSION AWARENESS DEVELOPING
DEPRESSION MONITORING KIT****Response to FDA Warning on Inadequate Monitoring of Antidepressants**

WALTHAM, Massachusetts, November 15, 2004 – Julie Totten, president and founder of Families for Depression Awareness, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping families recognize and cope with various depressive and mood disorders, announced the organization's development of a Depression Monitoring Kit for patients and their families.

“As family members, we know that we can play a critical role but we need to learn how to monitor depression,” said Totten. Six months after my brother took his life, I helped my father get diagnosed and treated for major depression. To help families and patients monitor treatment, our organization is in the process of developing a depression treatment-monitoring tool kit – for medication, psychotherapy, or both,” continued Totten. “To create a useful resource, we are seeking input from a variety of experts and welcome ongoing collaboration.”

“Close treatment monitoring should be the norm, but it's not,” said Totten. “We embrace the Food and Drug Administration's advice that family caregivers should be actively involved in observing and discussing symptom changes in patients. This inclusive family approach to treatment is essential and should replace the notion that the management of depression treatment only exists between patients and their clinicians.”

According to Totten, family caregivers provide invaluable additional insight into changes in patient's symptoms. They play a critical role in watching for signs of mania in patients,

one of the FDA's concerns. If mania is observed, clinicians can then correctly diagnose patients with bipolar disorder and prescribe the appropriate medication.

Families for Depression Awareness will have a pilot version of the Depression Monitoring Kit available beginning of February, 2005. There will be two versions of the kit: one for parents of children and teens and one for adults.

Families for Depression Awareness, www.familyaware.org, is a national nonprofit organization helping families recognize and cope with depressive disorders. The organization provides education, outreach, and advocacy to support families. Families for Depression Awareness is made up 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.

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