



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DEPREESION

INTRODUCTION

Depression is a common mental disorder in the community. It has been shown that up to 3-4 persons out of every 10 persons in the community suffer from a depressive illness resulting in great ill health.

Depression however, in most cases goes unrecognized and as a result the condition is not treated/managed properly.

The purpose of this leaflet is to help you better understand what Depression is and how it can be managed

WHAT IS DEPRESSION

Depression is an illness characterized by Persistent low mood (Sadness) or loss of interest in pleasurable activities. The common symptoms for depression include:

- Unexplained sadness or unhappiness (almost daily and throughout the day) for at least 2 weeks
- Lack of sleep or disturbed sleep, some patients sleep excessively
- Loss of interest for social contact (wants to be alone)
- Loss of interest in what the patient used to enjoy
- Patient (s) may have poor or excessive appetite for food; may loose or gain weight
- Loss of energy, easily becoming tired with reduced activity or unexplained general weakness
- Reduced concentration and attention and hg difficult in decision making.
- Patient speaks slowly and in a low tone
- Loss of interest in sexual activities
- Feelings of worthlessness, failure, guilt, self blame and low self esteem
- Fear of dying ,recurrent thoughts of death and acts of self harm or suicide
- Numerous body complaints such as headaches and backaches that do not respond to treatment
- Too much worrying and thinking about personal problems and the future

WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION?

In most cases depression will follow difficult life events that represent a loss such as a job loss or bereavement etc. However, Depression can also develop "out of the blue" with no clear precipitating factor.

Depression may also be due to another mental disorder e.g Anxiety, physical illness such as HIV infection and Cancer, medication and abuse of alcohol or other substances of abuse.

Depression in Uganda is also related to poverty, adverse family and other relationships.

HOW IS DEPRESSION MANAGED /TREATED

The treatment of Depression should begin with a thorough mental and physical assessment by a qualified health worker. The assessment helps to detect the depression and what might have caused it. Following assessment, a patient with depression may be admitted into a health facility for treatment e.g if there is a risk of suicide.

It is important for the patient and their family to know about the following;

- Depression is an illness and not a sign of weakness.
- Effective treatment is available
- Depression is treatable and the patient can recover and be able to function normally
- Treatment helps to prevent future relapse

of depression

- Drugs may have side effects but these lessen as body adjusts to them

TREATMENT OPTIONS

There are three main approaches to the treatment

1) Medicine for treatment of Depression are called anti depressants. It is important that it is a qualified health worker that prescribes these medicines

2) Psychological; which essentially includes various forms of counseling

3) Social management; this includes rehabilitation to help patient resume activities of daily living and to stay at work, foster helpful and supportive family behaviour, and helping patient overcome a number of hardships.

REMEMBER

Depression is a common mental disorder which can be treated by a qualified health worker and the patient can fully recover and function normally.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

The nearest Mental Health worker or the office in charge of Mental Health, Ministry of Health