

Late-life Depression: Current Issues and New Challenges

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Abstract

Introduction: Depression is a common psychiatric disorder in older people but tends to be underrecognised and undertreated, leading to impaired functioning, increased morbidity and mortality including suicide, and greater service utilisation. **Methods:** A Medline search of journal articles on depression in older people, which highlighted specific and pertinent issues of prevalence, classification, screening instruments, elderly suicide and various treatment modalities, was done. **Results:** Late-life depression represents a heterogenous group of mood disturbances that may present with atypical features and occur in a complex medical psychosocial context. Appropriate screening and assessment procedures and holistic, multidisciplinary treatment approaches are discussed. Future challenges lie in areas of early detection and intervention, advances in treatment strategies, training and service developments and effective prevention programmes. **Conclusion:** By raising awareness and understanding of depression among primary healthcare and other healthcare practitioners, more depressed elderly with comorbid medical problems can be successfully identified and helped.

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Key words: Comorbidity, Depressive disorder, Prevention, Primary healthcare

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