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**DEPRESSION**

**INTRODUCTION**: Globally, depression is a common illness with more than 264 million people affected and the third major cause of death. Depression differs from usual mood fluctuations and short-lived emotional responses to challenges in everyday life. It becomes severe when long lasting with moderate or severe intensity leading to a serious health condition. The affected person suffers greatly and performs poorly at school, work and family and can lead to suicide. About 800,000 people die due to suicide yearly. Suicide is the second leading cause of death in 15-29 years old. Due to increase burden of depression and mental health conditions, world health assembly in May 2013 called for a comprehensive response to mental disorders at the country level. In Africa, 50% females suffer depression while 4.9% in males. Nigeria has a prevalence rate of 3.9%, 7 million Nigerians currently suffer depression. World Health Organization (WHO) studies revealed that prevalence of depression is 50% higher in females than in males.

**DEFINITION:** Depression as defined by WHO is a group of conditions associated with the elevation or lowering of a person’s mood, such as depression or bipolar disorder.

**DIAGNOSIS;** Is through history taking, asking specific questions, physical exam, and laboratory test like blood test to check medical conditions.

**COMMON TYPES OF DEPRESSION;** Clinical depression- is a mental health disorder characterized by persistently depressed mood or loss of interest in activities. It is more common with more than 1.5 million cases yearly but it is treatable by professionals within months. Major depression- a constant state of hopelessness and despair, one finds it difficult to work, study, sleep or eat. Bipolar disorder or manic depression- where one sometimes feels very happy and alternating with episodes of depression. Depressive psychosis- also referred to psychosis where one looses touch with reality and can have hallucinations and delusions. Pre-natal depression- It has post-partum onset and common during pregnancy or within four weeks of child birth. Premenstrual dysphonic disorder- a severe form of pre- menstrual syndrome associated with cramps, bloating, pains, headache, sadness and despair.Seasonal depression or seasonal affective disorder- has seasonal pattern and sometimes happens during winter months with signs, social withdrawal, increased sleep, sadness. Situational depression- occurs due to specific events or situations like death of love ones, divorce and serious life threatening event. Atypical depression- It temporarily goes away in response to positive events.

**CAUSES**; Family History of depression- is a high risk of developing depression, early childhood trauma affects the body and reacts easily to stress and when structure of the frontal lobe of the brain in less active and medical conditions like in chronic illness, insomnia or attention deficit. History of drug abuse or alcohol is another cause. Stressors like pressure in school during examinations and assignments. Other risk factors are low self esteem, personal history of mental illness, some medications and stressful events and loss of loved ones, economic problems, divorce and loss of job.

**SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**- Behavior- not going out anymore, loss of interest in activities in school and home, depend on sedatives and alcohol, lacks concentration, withdraws from friends and family. Feelings- disappointed, guilty, frustrated, irritable, lack self confidence, sad, unhappy. Physical- churning gut, headache and muscle pains, loss of appetite, weight loss or gain, sleep problem, tired always. Thoughts- I am a failure, worthless, life not worth living and people would be better off without me.

**TREATMENT**; Life style changes relief depression faster and prevents reoccurrence. Regular exercise boost serotonin, endorphins trigger the growth of new brain cells. Ensure social support to improve network and reduce isolation keeping regular contact with friends and family to relief depression. Nutrition- eating well-balanced meals to give energy and minimize mood swings. Stop or reduce sugary and fatty food. Sleep for seven to nine hours per day to reduce depression symptoms like irritability, sadness and fatigue. Stress reduction also improves one’s well being mentally. Also rule out medical cause through regular check up by your Doctor for medical conditions like hypothyroidism that can trigger depression and treat same. Psychotherapy gives one skills and insight to feel better and prevent depression. There are cognitive therapy, cognitive behaviors therapy and psychodynamic therapy, that teach practical techniques on how to reframe negative thinking and employ skills in combating depression. Therapy and ` the big picture’ in depression improves relationships, to reduce isolation and build social support. Setting health boundaries at home and relationships to reduce isolation and build social support. Setting health boundaries at home and relationships relieve stress. Handling life problems with trusted therapist provide good feedback in more ways to handle life’s challenges. Individual and group therapy can be very useful involving one on one and group building relationship and sharing sensitive information and getting attention. The group therapy provides listening to peers offering inspiration, ideas and increasing social activities and network. Never give up when therapy seems difficult and painful, discuss feelings and reactions honestly and therapists will help you out. National mental health centers can be of help or local senior centers, religious organizations, community mental health clinics. Medication (drugs) may help relieve symptoms of moderate and severe depression. These anti- depressants have side effects and withdrawal can be difficult. Trans cranial magnetic stimulation therapy (TMS), a non-invasive treatment that directs recurring magnetic energy pulses at the regions of the brain to improve communication between different parts of the brain is very effective. Alteration and complementary treatment for depression are vitamins, herbal supplements, occupuncture and relaxation techniques especially when the cause is nutritional in balance.

**PREVENTION AND CONTROL**; Avoid alcohol and drugs because they can alter your mood, do not blame self, ensure regular exercise, adequate sleep and eat balance and healthy diet, have positive attitude, join support group, ensure overall health is monitored, take care of your mind, be grateful every day, regulate blood sugar and work on your passion to achieve self esteem. Volunteer- getting out of your head and into the zone of helping others to keep you busy, ensure good parental care, social support is provided especially to youths and elderly, provide financial support to the needy example students, aged, avoid bad peer group and be spiritually inclined to the word of God. Punishment should be given to those that break laws, ensure rules and regulations, policies at home, communities are put and obeyed by all while parents and elders should be role models.

**COMPLICATIONS**; include the following- insomnia, stigma, hopelessness, loss of libido, suicide an hypoxia or reduced oxygen level in the brain leading to death.

**RECOMMENDATION**; I wish to recommend screening to all patients for depression and commence treatment immediately, include mental health in school curriculum from secondary to tertiary institutions. Health workers should be encouraged to study courses on mental health and depression. Government should build centers and hospitals for management and rehabilitation of depression and related cases and also take responsibility of their treatment financially.

**CONCLUSION**; management of depression requires collaborative effort of the patient, family, community, health worker and the Government to produce healthy citizens hence rising the standard of the nation that would be able to compete with other nations.

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