ANTIDEPRESSANT MEDICATION MANAGEMENT:
Improving Treatment Compliance

While depression is the most common behavioral health condition affecting adults, it is also one of the most treatable. The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) has established two measures to monitor medication compliance for patients with depression who are prescribed antidepressant medication. Compliance is monitored for the percentage of patients that stay on their antidepressant medication for at least three months and those that stay on their antidepressant medication for at least six months.

One way to increase patient medication compliance is with education at the beginning of the treatment episode. Patients should receive information related to the following key areas:

- How antidepressants work
- Benefits of antidepressant treatment
- Expectations regarding the remission of symptoms
- How long the medications should be used
- Coping with side effects of the medication

REMINd PATIENTS TO:

- Speak to their health care professional often about the side effects of the medication.
- Tell their health professional about all current medical conditions and medications they are taking, including non-prescription drugs, herbs, and supplements to support assessment of potential drug interactions.
- Schedule regular follow-up appointments so their health care professional can monitor progress to determine whether a particular medication is working for them.
- Consider that they may need to try several different medications before finding the one that works best.
- Continue to take medication as prescribed for at least 6 months after they feel better in order to reduce the chances of feeling depressed again. Patients should understand that some people need to remain on medication for several months or years (maintenance therapy). Others need medication for the remainder of their lives, especially those who have had several episodes of major depression.