

Physician Fact Sheet

On Depression In Adult Persons With Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities

1. Depression is common in adult patients with mental retardation or developmental disability (MR/DD).
2. Symptoms of depression may depend on the severity of intellectual disability.
3. The patient with mild MR/DD should be able to describe typical symptoms of depression.
4. The patient with severe MR/DD may manifest behavioral symptoms of depression, including weight loss, sleep disturbance, agitation, or self-injurious behavior.
5. Anxiety is common in the depressed patient with MR/DD; however, benzodiazepines should be prescribed with great care.
6. Depression may produce psychosis in the person with MR/DD.
7. The SSRI's are the first drug of choice for treatment of depression in patients
8. Depressed patients should receive a minimum 6-weeks trial of adequate doses of medication before switching to a second agent.
9. Nortriptyline is the tricyclic of choice for the depressed patient with MR/DD.
10. Treatment resistance to antidepressant medications suggests some other behavioral, neurological or medical problem.
11. Psychotic depression may require a brief course of antipsychotic medication until depression is improved.
12. Electro-shock is safe and effective in the severely depressed patient with MR/DD when all reasonable therapy fails.