Treatment for Depression

Make diagnosis of major depressive disorder (MDD) (Tables 1, 2, 7 & 8)

Refer patient? (see referral considerations at left)

Select and initiate treatment
- Mild MDD*: Pharmacotherapy or psychotherapy
- Moderate / severe MDD**: Pharmacotherapy plus psychotherapy

Monitor acute treatment
- Pharmacotherapy: Every 1-2 weeks as needed [D*]
- Psychotherapy: In conjunction with therapist [D*]

Assess response
- Pharmacotherapy: 4-6 weeks [D*]
- Psychotherapy: 6-12 weeks [D*]

Monitor treatment:
- Pharmacotherapy: Consider adjusting dosage/Consider augmenting with psychotherapy
- Psychotherapy: Consider augmenting with medical therapy

Assess response after 4-6 weeks [D*]

Clearly better

Somewhat better

Not better at all

Complete remission?

Has patient relapsed during ongoing assessment?

Yes

No

Ongoing Assessment
- Pharmacotherapy [A*]: continue for 9-12 months; consider maintenance treatment
- Psychotherapy: consider resolution of unresolved psychosocial issues
- Assess for relapse

Consider:
- Changing treatment
- Re-evaluating diagnosis
- Consulting with a psychiatrist

* Mild depression: Depression that meets criteria for MDD but without prominent vegetative symptoms, suicidal ideation, or significant functional impairment.

**Moderate to severe depression: Depression with significant vegetative symptoms, hopelessness, or suicidal ideation.

* Levels of evidence for the most significant recommendations:
A = randomized controlled trials; B = controlled trials, no randomization; C = observational trials; D = opinion of expert panel.