

## POCKET PROTOCOL FOR MANAGING DEPRESSION

**STEP 1: Use an SSRI**, (**FLUOXETINE & CITALOPRAM** ARE UMHS PREFERRED), VENLAFAXINE (EFFEXOR XR), BUPROPRION (WELLBUTRIN SR OR XL) OR MIRTAZEPINE (REMERON).

**STEP 2: SWITCH TO ANY OTHER STEP 1 AGENT OR TRICYCLIC ANTIDEPRESSANTS (TCA)**. AMONG TCAs, **NORTRIPTYLINE AND DESIPRAMINE** ARE PREFERRED. TRY A 2<sup>ND</sup> SSRI IF THE 1<sup>ST</sup> FAILS. MANY PATIENTS HAVE A GOOD RESPONSE TO THE 2<sup>ND</sup> SSRI.

**STEP 3: Use of any of the agents in Step 2 or a Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitor (MAOI)**. IF SSRIS WERE TRIED IN STEP 1 & 2, CHOOSE AN AGENT FROM A DIFFERENT CLASS (E.G. BUPROPRION OR A TCA).

### AUGMENTATION/COMBINATION STRATEGIES

IF THE PATIENT PARTIALLY RESPONDS TO MONOTHERAPY AND IS TOLERATING IT WELL, AUGMENTATION WITH A SECOND AGENT MAY BE PREFERABLE TO SWITCHING TO DIFFERENT MONOTHERAPY. ADDING LITHIUM OR T-3 (CYTOMEL) HAS THE BEST SUPPORT IN THE LITERATURE, BUT MANY CLINICIANS TRY COMBINING TWO ANTI-DEPRESSANTS FIRST. AN SSRI + WELLBUTRIN IS VERY COMMON, ESPECIALLY IF FATIGUE OR SEXUAL SIDE EFFECTS ARE A PROBLEM. AN SSRI + A TCA OR REMERON MAY BE HELPFUL IF INSOMNIA OR ANXIETY ARE PERSISTENT PROBLEMS. THIS MAY BE TRIED AT STEP 1, 2, OR 3.

## Key Points



- Aim for remission (75-100% improvement).
- Allow 4-6 weeks at solid (not starting) doses before switching to a new antidepressant (assuming that side effects are not forcing the change).
- By step 3, choose an agent from a different class than used in steps 1 & 2.
- Augmentation with lithium may be tried at any step, especially if the patient is benefiting from the primary antidepressant but needs additional effect.
- For patients with co-morbid anxiety or who identify themselves as “medication sensitive” it is best to start the medication at half the usual starting dose.
- If the patient fails to remit with all these efforts, consider referral for specialty care, as step 6 involves electroconvulsive therapy (ECT).
- If you have any questions regarding TMAP, please contact Julie Kuebler ([jkuebler@umich.edu](mailto:jkuebler@umich.edu)), Dr. Kevin Kerber ([kkerber@umich.edu](mailto:kkerber@umich.edu)) or Dr. Mike Klinkman ([mklinkma@umich.edu](mailto:mklinkma@umich.edu)).

For more info on depression treatment guidelines for health professionals visit:  
<http://www.med.umich.edu/depression/guideadultdep.htm>