Introducing...

Depression and anxiety are common in primary care practice and associated with decreased health-related quality of life and increased symptom burden and health care utilization. Patients with these disorders are also often challenging to manage and unable or reluctant to access specialty mental health services for treatment.

Online Treatment for Mood and Anxiety Disorders is a 4-year National Institute of Mental Health-funded trial that will compare the effectiveness of two on-line treatments for these conditions both to each other and to primary care physicians’ (PCPs) “usual care.” Both treatments will be provided within the context of a “collaborative care” program that we and others have proven effective.

What are the on-line treatments?

Eligible depressed and/or anxious patients will be randomized to either: (1) Beating the Blues, a proven-effective computerized cognitive behavioral therapy program that patients can access 24/7 via the Internet; (2) Beating the Blues plus access to an Internet support group that will allow patients to communicate with one another, post questions, and access additional online resources; or (3) their doctors’ “usual care.”

As in our previous trials, a care manager may recommend the addition or adjustment of an anti-depressant, typically a generic SSRI, or referral to a mental health specialist. However, the care manager will first consult with a study physician before communicating these recommendations to the patient’s PCP who will then be responsible for prescribing as we will neither dispense nor prescribe any medications.

What is “usual care”?

If the patient is randomized to “usual care,” then the referring PCP may request our assistance with a referral to a mental health specialist. Also, if we detect a patient’s symptoms have worsened significantly from the time of study enrollment (baseline) or suicidal ideations during any of our follow-up telephone assessments at 3-, 6-, or 12-months, then we will inform the PCP as soon as possible.

Who is eligible to participate?

We will enroll 700 patients aged 18-75 experiencing at least a moderate level of mood and/or anxiety symptoms who are referred to us from several UPMC-affiliated primary care practices using EpicCare. Given the focus of our trial, we require that all patients have Internet access and e-mail.

How can patients be referred?

To facilitate the referral process, we programmed EpicCare to generate a Best Practice Alert during office encounters with patients aged 18-75 who have either depression or anxiety on their problem list. Referrals can also be sent anytime to our pool message “P MAX.”

If you believe one of your patients may benefit from our trial, then we ask you to refer him/her to us via EpicCare after you obtain your patient’s verbal consent.

To Refer: BPA or P MAX

www.beatingthebluesus.com