CENTRAL LOUISIANA Medical Psychology Clinic

DEPRESSIVE DISORDERS

What is Depression

Depression is more than occasional sadness or feeling "down." It is a common mental health condition that affects mood, thoughts, behavior, and physical well-being. While everyone experiences periods of low mood, depression is characterized by symptoms that are persistent, intense, and interfere with daily functioning. Depression can impact how a person feels about themselves, how they relate to others, and how they manage responsibilities at work, school, or home. With appropriate treatment and support, depression is highly treatable.

How Depression Presents

Depression may tend to go unrecognized as it can present differently from person to person. Some individuals may appear to be functioning outwardly while experiencing significant internal distress. Symptoms to look out for include:

- Persistent feelings of sadness, emptiness, or hopelessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed
- Fatigue or low energy
- Changes in sleep
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Feelings of worthlessness, guilt, or excessive self-criticism
- Social withdrawal or isolation
- Irritability or increased frustration
- Physical complaints such as headaches or stomach pain

Most Common Depressive Disorders

Individuals can struggle with several different types of depression, including but not limited to:

- Major Depressive Disorder
  - Persistent low mood and loss of interest or pleasure lasting at least two weeks, accompanied by cognitive, emotional, and physical symptoms
- Persistent Depressive Disorder (Dysthymia)
  - Chronic, lower-grade depressive symptoms lasting two years or longer
- Seasonal Affective Disorder
  - Depressive symptoms that occur seasonally, most commonly during fall and winter months

How Can CLMPC Help?

CLMPC offers comprehensive, evidence-based treatment for individuals experiencing depression. Treatment plans are individualized and may include psychotherapy, medication management, or a combination of both.

Assessment

Assessment for depression includes a comprehensive clinical interview and the use of standardized rating scales. Clinicians evaluate mood symptoms, duration, severity, functional impact, medical history, and potential contributing factors.

Medication Management

Medication can be an effective component of treatment for depression, particularly when symptoms are moderate to severe. The doctors at CLMPC work collaboratively with individuals to develop an appropriate psychopharmacologic protocol based on symptoms, medical history, and treatment response. Medication may be used alone or in combination with psychotherapy. Common medications prescribed include anti-depressants, atypical antipsychotics, or other mental health medication. Anti-depressants typically take 4-8 weeks to fully take effect, making consistency important to recovery. Regular follow-up appointments will be schedule to monitor treatment response and side-effects

Psychotherapies for Depression

Psychotherapy for depression addresses the underlying cognitive, emotional, and behavioral patterns. Used in conjunction with medication, psychotherapy can support long-term recovery and improved quality of life. Psychotherapy for depression at CLMPC may include:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
  - Helps individuals identify and challenge negative thought patterns, encourages re-engagement in meaningful activities, and builds problem-solving and coping skills
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
  - Helps individuals increase psychological flexibility and develop new understandings of what is maintaining their distress, encourages engagement with one's values, and reduces avoidance and withdrawal.
- Other Therapy Support
  - Mindfulness to increase awareness of thoughts and emotions
  - Consideration of grief, role transitions, work stress, and relationship difficulties
  - Behavioral activation or re-engagement with pleasant activities
  - Processing family dynamics and/or past trauma to fully understand the root causes of the individual's depression