

## Young Physicians Call for Better Medical School Training in Depression

Paris (ots/PRNewswire) -

- Multi-National Survey Highlights Gaps in PCPs Knowledge About Depression and Painful Physical Symptoms

Nine of 10 young primary care physicians (PCPs) believe medical school training about depression -- specifically regarding its painful physical symptoms -- needs to be improved, according to findings from a multi-national survey released today in Paris.

Of the 500 PCPs surveyed across five countries -- Brazil, France, Germany, Mexico and the United Kingdom -- about one-third felt medical school prepared them to diagnose depression on a patient's first visit (35 percent) or prepared them to treat all symptoms of depression, emotional and physical, to complete remission (31 percent). The PCPs interviewed all had been in clinical practice for three to five years.

"It's important that doctors quickly recognize and consider physical symptoms -- such as fatigue, vague aches and pains and sleep disturbances -- as possible signs of depression," said Preston Garrison, Secretary-General and Chief Executive Officer of the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH), one of the sponsors of the survey. "A delayed or missed diagnosis prolongs a depressed person's suffering and may decrease the likelihood of a full recovery."

Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of PCPs said their training did teach the importance of considering both the emotional and painful physical symptoms of depression and half (51 percent) said they were taught that depressed patients often present primarily with painful physical symptoms. When probed, however, PCPs displayed some knowledge gaps and misperceptions about the role of painful physical symptoms in the diagnosis and treatment of depression. When asked what five depression symptoms came to mind, for example, only one-third or fewer PCPs named painful physical symptoms, and less than one-third (27 percent) believe painful physical symptoms are a symptom of depression always or most of the time. In addition, while PCPs believe depressed patients will achieve remission (full symptom resolution), the great majority mistakenly believe treating emotional

symptoms will automatically lead to resolution of physical aches and pains. Clinical research shows that physical symptoms often go unresolved even after emotional symptoms have abated.(1)

Young PCPs agree (48 percent) or strongly agree (39 percent) that medical school training about depression needs to be improved, and the majority agree (52 percent) or strongly agree (34 percent) that training specifically about the painful physical symptoms of depression needs to be improved.

"As a result of the survey findings, WFMH is calling for a worldwide improvement of medical school education regarding depression and painful physical symptoms," said Preston Garrison. "As such, the WFMH will be implementing an international advocacy outreach initiative to encourage curriculum improvement. The intent of the program is to increase PCPs' expertise regarding the role of both emotional and painful physical symptoms in diagnosis and treatment of depression, in the hope of improving worldwide diagnosis, treatment and recovery rates."

The Testing the Medics survey is part of the WFMH's Breaking through Barriers depression awareness campaign, a public education initiative designed to overcome the stigma of depression and improve the worldwide standard of care in depression. The campaign is co-sponsored by Eli Lilly and Company and Boehringer Ingelheim.

#### About the Testing the Medics Survey

The WFMH, in partnership with Eli Lilly and Company and Boehringer Ingelheim, commissioned the Testing the Medics international survey to measure how well medical schools educate PCPs about the link between depression and painful physical symptoms, and to identify potential gaps in young PCPs' knowledge.

An estimated 121 million people worldwide suffer from depression,(2) yet roughly three-quarters of people with a depressive disorder never receive any treatment, according to the World Health Organization.(3) Despite the high prevalence of physical symptoms in the primary care setting, the WFMH is concerned that young PCPs may not receive adequate education about the connection between depression and painful physical symptoms, and that such low awareness may be a contributor to the large depression prevalence-treatment gap.

## Survey - Methodology

Independent market research company Harris Interactive(R) conducted the survey on behalf of WFMH via telephone between April 21 and July 03, 2006, in Brazil, France, Germany, Mexico and the United Kingdom. Interviews were conducted with a total of 501 primary care physicians (approximately 100 in each country) with three to five years of clinical experience since completing their residencies. Harris only surveyed doctors who see patients for at least 20 hours per week and who treat at least two depression patients per month. With samples of this size, there is 95 percent certainty that the overall results have a sampling error of plus or minus 4.4 percentage points.

## About the WFMH

The WFMH is an international interdisciplinary membership organization whose mission is to promote, among all people and nations, the highest possible level of mental health in its broadest biological, medical, educational, and social aspect. Consultative status at the United Nations provides WFMH a variety of opportunities to engage in mental health advocacy at the global level, working closely with the World Health Organization, UNESCO, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Commission on Human Rights, the International Labor Organization and others.

(1) Greco T, et al. J Gen Intern. M 2004; 19: 813-818

(2) World Health Organization. Factsheet - Depression, 2005. Available at: [http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/management/depression/definition/en/](http://www.who.int/mental_health/management/depression/definition/en/).

(3) World Health Organization, Available at: <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/publications/facts/diabetes/en/>

(Logo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20060919/BTBLOGO> )

## Rückfragehinweis:

Katy Davidson of Weber Shandwick Worldwide, +44-20-7067-0205 /Photo: NewsCom: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20060919/BTBLOGO> , PRN Photo Desk, [photodesk@prnewswire.com](mailto:photodesk@prnewswire.com)

\*\*\* OTS-ORIGINALTEXT PRESSEAUSSENDUNG UNTER AUSSCHLIESSLICHER

INHALTLICHER VERANTWORTUNG DES AUSENDERS - WWW.OTS.AT \*\*\*

OTE0002 2006-09-19/09:06

190906 Sep 06

Link zur Aussendung:

[http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTE\\_20060919\\_OTE0002](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTE_20060919_OTE0002)