



Australian Prescriber



AN INDEPENDENT REVIEW

Alexander Building
Furzer St, PHILLIP ACT
Tel: 02 6282 6755; Fax 02 6282 6855

e-mail: info@australianprescriber.com
internet: www.australianprescriber.com

Address correspondence to:
The Editor, Australian Prescriber
PO Box 100, WODEN ACT 2606

8/2001

June 2001

Late-life depression: what can be done?

Depression may be more common in older people than we think, according to an article in the latest edition of *Australian Prescriber*.

Depression is commonly not recognised in elderly people as it is often not as obvious as it is in younger people, writes Associate Professor John Snowdon, Director of Psychogeriatric Services at Sydney's Rozelle Hospital.

Many older people have at least one physical ailment, and they are likely to focus attention on their physical problems even if they are depressed. Older people may not see themselves as depressed or regard it as worth 'troubling' their doctor over.

Professor Snowdon says the key symptoms of depression are lowered mood and loss of interest.

"Patients may attribute symptoms like lack of energy, inability to concentrate, irritability, poor sleep, weight loss and feeling slowed up, to their age, rather than a psychological cause," he said.

"They may feel less comfortable than younger people talking to their doctors about such symptoms."

However, Professor Snowdon said, overall the outlook for late-life depression is as good as it is in younger patients.

"Patients may take longer to respond, but there is good reason to be positive," he said.

"Good liaison between general practitioners and psychiatry services for older people helps promote identification and appropriate treatment of late-life depression."

For a copy of the complete article or information about *Australian Prescriber*, visit the homepage http://www.australianprescriber.com/public_html/default.htm or phone 02 6289 7038.

Contact Associate Professor Snowdon 02 9556 9100 (bh)

Australian Prescriber

This national independent review of therapeutic topics is designed to assist health professionals in their duties. The journal provides independent comment - no advertising is accepted.

Among other articles, the current issue of *Australian Prescriber* also looks at medical guidelines, and irritable bowel syndrome.