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NEW STUDY UNDERWAY TO PROBE SAFETY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ANTIDEPRESSANT MEDICATION FOR ADOLESCENTS

(Use the audio player below to listen to the interview.)

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By Dennis Miller



Adolescence is well known for being one of life's most challenging periods, full of dramatic physical changes, tricky emotional adjustments, and the difficult process of establishing one's identity and place in the world. Perhaps not surprisingly, a significant number of teens also develop clinical depression. Too often, it goes undiagnosed, possibly due as much to misconceptions about what kind of person typically suffers from depression as it is to the prevailing notion that, for a teen,

being moody, withdrawn or irritable is just normal behavior. While our existing array of antidepressant medications has been well researched for use and efficacy among adult populations, we have far less data on how effective or safe they are for adolescent populations. The result is not only an incomplete medicine chest for clinicians to use, but also a situation in which anecdotes occasionally take the place of real, hard data on the medications' effects. Sensationalized stories of teen suicides get big play in the popular media and have led in some cases to government warnings about their use in teens. This has only led to an even greater level of under-treatment of teen depression, as parents and clinicians become wary of prescribing antidepressants. Hoping to help fill this void in clinical knowledge, the Segal Institute for Clinical Research in North Miami, Florida, is now conducting clinical trials on one antidepressant that's long been used for adult populations to see exactly how effective and safe it is for use among adolescents. *BHC Journal* recently spoke with the Institute's President, Director of Operations and Co-Founder, Scott Segal, M.D., about the study and the issues surrounding adolescent depression. Dr. Segal is also the Founder of Compass Health Systems, the largest provider of mental health services in South Florida. He has conducted over 220 phase I-IV clinical trials in outpatient, inpatient and nursing home facilities.