TREATMENT OF DEPRESSION IN PATIENTS WITH CORONARY HEART DISEASE

To the Editor:

Vieweg and colleagues provide excellent updates on treating depression in patients with coronary artery disease. Their practical approach, however, leaves out an important intermediate step.

For the primary care physician with a large number of patients with possible depression, some confirmatory testing of patients identified on a 2-question screen would be appropriate. In my family practice residency program, we used the 2-question screen and subsequent test with Patient Health Questionnaire-9 as a screening tool for confirmation. The Patient Health Questionnaire-9 is a well-validated, convenient, and easy-to-apply tool to screen depression and score the severity. It also has the best positive likelihood ratio and positive predictive value compared with the other commonly available screening instruments. I recommend that all primary care providers and even cardiologists use this convenient tool that can improve the care of patients with depression.

US Preventive Services Task Force recommendations state that “screening improves the accurate identification of depressed patients in primary care settings and that treatment of depressed adults identified in primary care settings decreases clinical morbidity.” Those patients with coronary artery disease can be seen, screened, and treated best at primary care settings.

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References