

All these factors, such as daytime effects and impact on sleep, should be taken into account in the choice of antidepressant.

Conclusion

The institution of good sleep hygiene (Table 2) is important alongside pharmacological treatment, and some of the measures—for example, taking exercise and avoiding excessive alcohol consumption—may also help to alleviate the depression. Reinforcement of light and environmental factors leading to circadian entrainment may help restore normal rhythm. This is particularly important in the elderly as these rhythms are weaker in this age group and so need more aggressive attempts at normalisation.

Good sleep hygiene

Depression-related sleep disturbances are common and worthy of effective treatment. However, making a correct diagnosis and choosing the appropriate treatment

may require careful consideration. Indeed, some antidepressants can exacerbate the problem. Fortunately, a growing understanding of the common neurochemistry behind depression and insomnia suggests that some newer antidepressants may tackle both problems. This should help reduce the burden imposed by sleep disturbances on both our patients' quality of life and the NHS's budget.

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