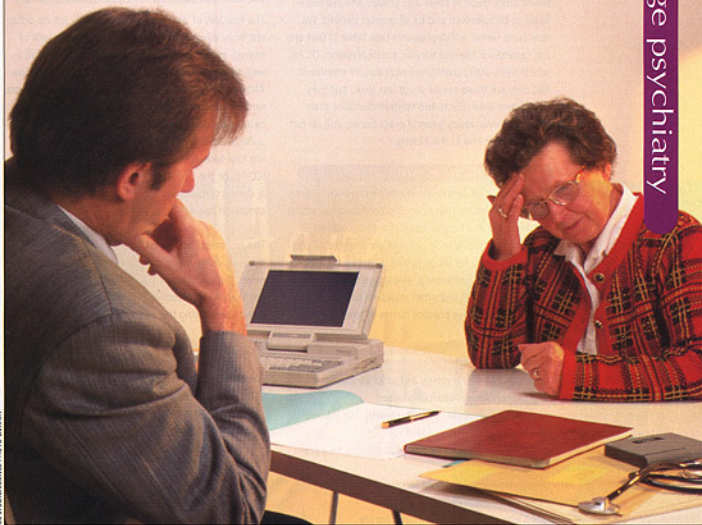


The introduction of newer classes of antidepressant provides an excellent opportunity to review management. Dr Peter Shaw offers some guidelines when treating older people in the community



CC BY/SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

Depression

Reassessing management in general practice

Depression is at least as common in the elderly as it is in the working population and is probably more prevalent in those in nursing and residential homes: it may occur in up to 20 per cent of the over-65s and in up to 50 per cent of patients in long-stay geriatric wards¹. The suicide rate in older people is 15 times higher than in the general population, and the

older age group accounts for 25 per cent of all suicides—the majority take place during a documented depressive illness—with elderly men being at particularly high risk².

Despite this alarmingly high incidence, depression is poorly identified and treated in older people³, yet it is