

Depression

Management in residential care

Professor Anthony Mann considers the crucial role played by both general practitioners and care staff in the treatment of depression in older people in long-term care

Depending on the diagnostic criteria used, at least 15-20 per cent of residents in long-term care suffer from depression. Many are depressed at admission, while up to one in three are depressed after one year in the institution'. Unfortunately, depression is underdiagnosed in this population and, as discussed in last month's article, both general practitioners and care staff have a key role in recognising the condition in those under their care'. However, depression is reversible if it is correctly treated.

Elderly people with depression should respond to treatment with antidepressant medication, ideally combined with attention to current physical health status. Psychological and social factors should also be assessed in their role as precipitators or maintaining factors for the depression and these should be addressed, if appropriate, in the management—demonstrated by a recent study among older people with major depression receiving home care in the London Borough of Lewisham'. The mean age of the