Tip for That #3: Integrative Medicine Competency: Health Conditions (Depression)

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Despite some recent warm temps, today's snow reminds us that winter can last a long time in Wisconsin. I find many of my patients struggling with depression.

For those who need treatment but prefer to avoid prescription anti-depressants for various reasons (including black box warnings on suicidality) here are some options:

1. **S-Adenosyl Methionine (SAMe)**
   b. Avoid in patients with personal or family history of bipolar)

2. **St. John’s Wort (SJW)**
   b. SJW is metabolized through Cyp P450 – can decrease potency of OCPs and many other meds; use SJW cautiously

3. **Bright Light Exposure Therapy (BLET)**
   a. Cheap, effective and important in the dark months of winter
   b. Scroll down to see my smart phrase, which contains references


**Practical Tips:**
- SAMe: 400-800mg po bid; start at 200mg bid and gradually increase (need B12 and folate)
- SJW: 900-1500 mg per day in 2-3 divided doses of an extract standardized to 0.3% hypercin and/or 3-5% hyperforin
- See also Dr. Michelle Crane’s excellent smart phrase with additional options for evaluating and treating depression: PTEDDEPRESSIONRESOURCE

I hope you enjoyed this installment of Tip for That. I welcome your feedback.

Stay tuned for:
Tip for That #4 – Integrative Medicine Competency: Health Conditions (Adrenal Fatigue)
Bright Light Exposure Therapy (BLET)

- 10,000 Lux 1-2 hours daily (morning is best) improves depression
- Systematic Review BLET (Jorm, 2002)
  - Positive effect seasonal depression
  - Small effect non-seasonal depression
- Meta-analysis (Golden, 2005)
  - BLET or dawn simulation – positive for SAD
  - BLET (NOT dawn simulation) – positive depression
- Non-Rx option for depression in pregnancy

Criteria for Light Box Selection
(Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine)

There are no definitive criteria for the "best" treatment devices. The Center for Environmental Therapeutics recommends the following:

- Any light box you buy should have been tested successfully in peer-reviewed clinical trials.
- The box should provide 10,000 lux of illumination at a comfortable sitting distance. Product specifications are often missing or unverified.
- Fluorescent lamps should have a smooth diffusing screen that filters out ultraviolet (UV) rays. UV rays are harmful to the eyes and skin.
- The lamps should give off white light rather than colored light. "Full spectrum" lamps and blue (or bluish) lamps provide no known therapeutic advantage.
- The light should be projected downward toward the eyes at an angle to minimize aversive visual glare.

Smaller is not better. When using a compact light box, even small head movements will take the eyes out of the therapeutic range of the light.