Online Screener to Offer Help for Millions Suffering from Any of Four Common Psychiatric Illnesses

Study confirming accuracy of M-3 Checklist published in Annals of Family Medicine — First mental health application developed for electronic medical record systems.

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., March 8 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) — A one-page online checklist that can be completed in a few minutes accurately indicates whether a patient may have any of four major mental health conditions, according to a study to be published in the March/April 2010 issue of the Annals of Family Medicine. The free, Web-based screener, developed by M-3 Information, is available on-line at www.mymoodmonitor.com.

For the millions of Americans grappling with depression, anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or bipolar disorder, the documented accuracy of the M-3 Checklist is a major breakthrough for mental health care, according to the researchers from the University of North Carolina, Weill Medical College at Cornell University and the Boston University School of Medicine who conducted the study.

"The M-3 offers a quick and accurate way to determine whether a person might have one of these four common psychiatric conditions. It also provides a clear and concise printed report detailing the results of the test that can be shared and discussed with a person's family doctor or a mental health professional," says Larry Culpepper, MD, MPH, Chairman of the Department of Family Medicine at Boston University School of Medicine, and a co-author of the study.

"For the one-in-five Americans who have one of these diagnosable and treatable illnesses, the M-3 screener represents a major breakthrough by offering an easy-to-fill-out questionnaire that allows people to identify what's wrong with them, so they can get the help they need," says the article's lead author, Bradley N. Gaynes, MD, MPH, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of North Carolina.

The M-3 also screens for suicide risk and substance abuse, warning users who might be at risk for these conditions and urging that follow-up steps be taken. (Photos and graphics of the M-3 Checklist are available at www.tinyurl.com/M-3photos [redirects to Flickr].)

The M-3 Checklist is private, simple to use, and does not require any personal information to be divulged. It can be taken online, and soon will be available on mobile devices. Users can monitor their progress by retaking the test at regular intervals on Microsoft's HealthVault, which ensures the results remain private but allows the information to be shared with clinicians.

The M-3, which was independently funded and developed, is particularly timely: hospitals, doctors, and patients are preparing to use electronic medical record (EMR) systems to document all health care interactions and the M-3 is the first validated application to use EMR technology developed for mental health care. The recent Obama Administration's economic stimulus package includes more than $20 billion in funding for the development of a nationwide electronic health record system over the next four years.

According to the most recent estimate from the National Institute of Mental Health, the annual economic impact of untreated mood disorders is more than $70 billion. For sufferers of depression and anxiety, lack of treatment can lead to reduced productivity or job loss, strain on personal relationships, and in some cases, can trigger drug use and/or suicide. Unlike other health issues, the very onset of depression and anxiety symptoms can hinder efforts by the person affected to seek help, and many sufferers are held back by shame or lethargy.

According to the newly released study: "The M-3 is a valid, efficient, and feasible tool for screening common psychiatric illnesses, including bipolar disorder and PTSD, in primary care. Its diagnostic accuracy equals that of presently used single-disorder screens but with the additional benefit of being combined into a one-page tool. The M-3 potentially can reduce missed psychiatric diagnoses and facilitate proper treatment of identified cases."

The Annals study is based on the responses of 647 patients at the University of North Carolina Family Practice Medicine Clinic. Each subject filled out the 27-question M-3 checklist and then participated in a follow-up interview with a clinician who had no access to the results of the screener. The M-3 was effective in screening for any mood or anxiety disorder 83 percent of the time and for a specific disorder in 76 percent of cases.

The study was conducted by Bradley N. Gaynes, MD, MPH, Joanne De-Veaugh-Geiss, MA, LPA, and Hongbin Gu, PhD, all of the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry; David R. Rubinow, professor and chairman of psychiatry, University of North Carolina School of Medicine; Sam Weir, MD, University of North Carolina School of Medicine, Department of Family Medicine; Cora MacPherson, PhD, Social & Scientific Systems; Herbert C. Schulberg, PhD, M.S.Hyg., Weill Cornell Medical College; and Larry Culpepper, MD, MPH, professor and chairman of family medicine, Boston University and chief of family medicine, Boston Medical Center.

About M-3:
Sixty million Americans have a diagnosable mood or anxiety disorder every year while fewer than half of these individuals receive help for their condition. One reason for this shortfall has been the absence of a single, simple, and reliable screen that can assess the presence of the mood and anxiety disorders, including obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder and PTSD. The M-3 screener is a symptom checklist that a patient can use to rate his or her mood in one easy review. It is comprised of a short series of questions that touch on indicators of mental health and wellness.

The M-3 was developed by a team of mental health, strategic communications,

and information management experts, including Robert M. Post, MD, head of the Bipolar Collaborative Network; Bernard M. Snyder, MD, assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Georgetown University and a cognitive behavioral therapist; Michael L. Byer, director of M-3 Information; Larry Culpepper, MD, family practice program at Boston University; Gerald Hurowitz, MD, assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Columbia University and a clinical psychopharmacologist; and Bill Lichtenstein, president of Lichtenstein Creative Media. The free and private screener is available at www.mymoodmonitor.com and is independently funded by M-3 Information without pharmaceutical industry support.

About Annals of Family Medicine:
"Annals of Family Medicine" is a peer-reviewed, indexed research journal that provides a cross-disciplinary forum for new, evidence-based information affecting the primary care disciplines. Launched in May 2003, Annals is sponsored by seven family medical organizations, including the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Board of Family Medicine, the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine, the Association of Departments of Family Medicine, the Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors, the North American Primary Care Research Group, and the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

Annals is published six times each year and contains original research from the clinical, biomedical, social and health services areas, as well as contributions on methodology and theory, selected reviews, essays and editorials. Complete editorial content and interactive discussion groups for each published article can be accessed free of charge on the journal's Web site, www.annfammed.org.

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