

## **A note from our Medical Director – J. Moussai, M.D.**

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Dear colleagues, welcome to the Anthem Blue Cross *Provider News* publication. This is an opportunity to share with you a number of exciting changes that are happening here at Anthem Blue Cross (Anthem). The information can also provide meaningful clinical input that I hope will be pertinent and practical for your daily clinical use. First, let me introduce myself. I've taken over as the Anthem West Region Behavioral Health Medical Director as of October 1, 2019. Though I'm saddened by the departure of Dr. Friedman, the previous Medical Director, I'm very excited about this new role. Dr. Friedman was instrumental in the past few years in improving Anthem's Behavioral Health services and strengthening our collaboration with facility and professional providers, and we wish him the best of luck on his next career venture.

Here at Anthem, we're always striving towards enhancement of our services and products while staying true to our mission. I want to highlight some of the positive additions. One is 'Sydney' the personal health ally, which is a mobile device app providing personalized wellness activities and other beneficial features to our members. The other is the addition of IngenioRx (our mail-order pharmacy service), which has made pharmacy care more accessible, supporting of provider's care decisions and functions as a health advocate. Additionally, we're excited about the opportunity to expand behavioral health resources with the pending acquisition of Beacon Health and reemphasizing Anthem's commitment to emotional wellness.

Anthem is committed to enhancing treatment of major depression. The best practice treatment guidelines include consideration for medications, for example, antidepressants, psychotherapy, as well as mindfulness techniques. If started on an antidepressant, it is imperative that the patient continue with their medication for at least six months. Some suggestions to increase adherence would be educate the patient on time-course, potential side effects, and the importance of preventing relapse. One tool used for screening, diagnosing, monitoring and measuring the severity of depression is the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9). This self-reported questionnaire only takes a few minutes for a patient to complete and the provider to score. The PHQ-9, can also be used to monitor response after initiation of treatment and can be re-administered repeatedly. Other rating scales to consider are the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), Geriatric Depression Scale

(GDS), Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HAM-D), Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology-Systems Review (IDS-SR), Montgomery-Asberg Depression Rating Scale (MADRS), and Quick Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology (QIDS). Also, it is imperative to complete a treatment plan upon initiation of treatment to include a suicide risk assessment.

I hope that we continue to have ongoing conversations about how to enhance the care of our members. I welcome your suggestions and input about how we can most effectively use the *Provider News* platform to communicate. Don't hesitate to provide me with your feedback. Email our Provider Education team at [prov.communications@anthem.com](mailto:prov.communications@anthem.com) and in the subject line enter, **BH newsletter**. I look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts.

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