

Press Announcement (to be published by Dutch newspapers)

## **600 million cost reduction**

### **National Depression Initiative launched**

Utrecht, February 14th 2006.

Today the Trimbos institute (NIMHA) launches the Depression Initiative, a three year national programme aimed at prevention and treatment of depression. Prevention and adequate treatment of depression have an enormous positive public health impact. People are depressed less long, commit suicide less often and resume work sooner.

The Depression Initiative aims to attack depression by cooperation of patients and caregivers. Societal costs of depression amount to 1,3 billion euro per year. These costs can be reduced at least 50% by this programme. The Trimbos institute leads this programme and collaborates with 30 mental health institutions, 80 general practices, the Free Medical University Centre, the Institute of Extramural Medicine, the Institute of Medical Technology Assessment and the Netherlands study of Depression and Anxiety. The programme is financed by the RVVZ fund of health insurance companies.

In patients that visit the general practice setting 20% suffers from often unrecognised depression. If antidepressant medication is prescribed, only 50% of the patients takes this medication. By good diagnostic procedures combined with a stepped care approach (psychotherapy if possible, antidepressant medication if needed), effectiveness of treatment can be improved by at least 10%.

The Depression Initiative contains three parts. Prevention by improving public health awareness, screening, diagnosis and early treatment. National implementation of the multidisciplinary Depression guideline with the breakthrough method. And evaluation of the cost effectiveness of this approach in all settings of health care.

One of the aims of the programme is to inform patients about the kind of treatment that they can expect for depression. Another aim is to supply general practitioners and other doctors with tools derived from the guideline for efficient diagnosis and treatment in several health care settings, such as general practice setting, the

hospital setting and the company care setting. And the insurance companies will receive information about cost-effectiveness of several treatment modalities for depression. This approach is called diseasemanagement.

The steering-group of the Depression Initiative, chaired by Dr. C.M. van der Feltz-Cornelis, aims at improving the societal problem that depression poses by this innovative multidisciplinary approach to depression. This new approach also suits the goal of the European Alliance Against Depression, in which the Trimbos Institute represents the Netherlands, and that aims at suicide prevention by effective recognition and treatment of depression. Also, this approach suits the goal of the Dutch government that indicates depression in the prevention nota as one of the disorders that needs a specific approach in order to improve public health.