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Underwriting

Clinical Depression

UNDERWRITER:

Defined as someone sitting
in an ivory tower 900 miles
from here, trained to say,
"NO."

YOUR JOB:

To convince that
underwriter, with truthful
information, presented in
as favorable a light as
possible that it is desirable,
even possible to say
"YES."

Clinical or Major Depression is the most common form of depression. It is a mental illness that, like tuberculosis cannot be cured without proper medical treatment.

Clinical depression is readily treatable with counseling and/or medication to correct the chemical imbalance (low levels of brain serotonin and norepinephrine) that is found in people with symptoms of clinical depression

Unfortunately, half of these people never get treatment, and untreated, clinical depression can last up to a year. With treatment, most people see significant relief within weeks.

Events that can trigger a bout of clinical depression

- A death of a family member or close friend.
- An assault, car accident, or painful physical, mental, or emotional event.
- Marriage breakup or love lost.
- Constant physical, mental, or emotional pain.
- Major financial setback or bankruptcy.
- A major Embarrassment.
- Failing at school or at work.

Common Signs of Clinical Depression

- Impaired Concentration
- Inability to experience pleasure.
- Increase in self-critical, negative thoughts.
- Inability to sleep properly.
- Feeling of fatigue after sleeping for 8 hours or more.
- Food is tasteless, lack of appetite.
- Feelings of guilt, helplessness and hopelessness.
- Suicidal thoughts or attempted suicide.
- Missing deadlines, sloppy work, and carelessness.
- Personality changes.
- Increased sexual promiscuity.
- Increased dependency upon drugs or alcohol.

Ten percent of males will suffer from depression at some time, whereas 25% of women will experience clinical depression. In many teenagers, undiagnosed depression too often leads to attempted suicide.

Sadly, suicide is one of the leading causes of death in young people. It is estimated that 500,000 teenagers attempt suicide each year, and about 5,000 succeed!

The Number One Cause of Suicide is Untreated Depression

In order to evaluate the insurability of someone with clinical depression you need to ask the following important questions: When was the client initially diagnosed?

Clinical Depression can involve a short-term episode related to a stressful event such as the loss of a loved one, business setback, or loss of a job, to a prolonged illness requiring years of therapy and medication. It is extremely important to determine when the client was first diagnosed as being depressed, and how long treatment continued.

Has the client even been hospitalized for clinical depression?

Frequently the initial crisis that prompted the diagnosis will lead to a short period of hospitalization. The fact that the client underwent hospitalization for clinical depression does not mean that you should

expect a worse underwriting outcome. It is important to document the exact dates of hospital confinement, and the duration of treatment.

What medications are currently being taken?

There are a wide variety of medications that are used to treat clinical depression. It is extremely important to document all medications being taken with their dosages.

What type of follow-up care is the client receiving?

Clients who have close follow-up care with a mental health professional are much more likely to experience a favorable medical and therefore underwriting outcome. Those who avoid follow-up care are much less likely to be successful in their recovery and are therefore much less likely to obtain a favorable underwriting offer.

Have there been any attempts at suicide?

If there have been one or more attempts at suicide, it may be extremely difficult, if not impossible to obtain an offer for life insurance. Be sure to obtain complete information detailing why, when and where, also what has changed that might lead an underwriter to believe that suicide will not be attempted again?

What lifestyle changes has the client made to help improve their chances of successfully managing their depression?

It is important to document lifestyle changes that have improved the client's life in a positive manner. This will frequently include ending a dysfunctional relationship, resolving fears and guilts, changing jobs or locale, getting involved in new activities, or discovering new spiritual meaning.

NOTE: It is extremely important to document the lifestyle changes the client has made as part of the management of their depression.

The underwriter, while concerned that the client has experienced a bout of Clinical Depression, is more concerned with "recovery."

Is treatment still ongoing? Is the environment that contributed to the depression still present? Has there been measurable improvement? Is the client suicidal?

A good cover letter, from you the agent is essential. This is especially true in cases involving mental illness. Get into the habit of writing good cover letters to your underwriters. Your results will improve dramatically and your clients will thank you.