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Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance

People Living with Depression Mobilize to Express Treatment Priorities, Shape Future Treatment Options

People affected by depression urged to participate in survey and November 16, 2018 meeting with FDA

Chicago, Ill. – September 26, 2018 – In the 60 years that have passed since the first antidepressant medication was approved by the FDA, there have been significant advances in the scientific understanding of depression and better recognition of the challenges faced by many who live with this condition. Yet, treatment options that support individual definitions of wellness remain elusive for many. To address this need, the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) has launched the [“Well Beyond Blue”](#) initiative.



The initiative commenced on August 1, 2018 with an online [“Supporting Wellness” survey](#) and continues with a meeting on November 16, 2018 with FDA officials, medical product developers and other key stakeholders. The intent of Well Beyond Blue is to empower people living with depression to have a voice in the development of new treatment options by providing them with a platform to share their wellness preferences directly with decision makers. Both the survey and the meeting provide peers with the opportunity to articulate how depression affects their daily lives and how they define wellness.

DBSA’s chief executive officer, Michael Pollack, sees enormous need—and opportunity. “We encourage every person living with depression—on its own or along with another condition—to share his or her experience. FDA recognizes the importance of hearing from patients about their needs and expectations and DBSA is joined by 11 partner organizations to ensure we depict the full range of experiences with depression. This initiative is an important step forward for improving treatment options and helping people achieve or regain wellness.”

The November 16, 2018 “Well Beyond Blue” meeting is part of a larger series designed to help regulators understand what individuals living with mood disorders experience, which symptoms present the most difficulty, which treatment benefits matter most to them, and how they perceive potential risks and harms associated with treatment. Representatives from FDA’s centers for drug evaluation and research (CDER) and devices and radiologic health (CDRH) will participate, reflecting the current use of medications and medical devices to relieve depression. FDA CDER’s director of the Division of Psychiatry Products, Dr. Mitchell Mathis, will deliver opening remarks and Dr. Michelle Campbell of the agency’s CDER’s Clinical Outcome Assessments team will share observations at the end of the day. The half-day meeting will be held in Silver Spring, MD, and will be webcast live.

The “Supporting Wellness” survey is collecting quantitative and qualitative information from individuals who experience depression and those who care about them. A joint project between DBSA and the Milken Institute Center for Strategic Philanthropy, it has already attracted more than 4,600 responses from adults in every region of the country. To date, two-thirds of respondents indicate symptoms began before age 18; 74% indicate that depression has had a significant impact on their lives. Nearly one-third report having 10 or more discrete episodes

of severe depression; 36% indicate that its impact is persistent. DBSA will prepare a written report on the meeting and complete survey results for submission to FDA and wide public distribution in early 2019.

Major depression affects 6-7% of the U.S. population and is the leading cause of disability for adults ages 18-44. Women are two times as likely as men to experience depression and its annual toll on American businesses is approximately \$70 billion in medical expenditures, lost productivity, and other costs. Depression accounts for two-thirds of the 30,000 deaths by suicide each year in the U.S. While depression is a treatable condition, two out of three people with depression do not receive proper or adequate treatment. Unsuccessful treatment for depression results from a variety of factors and can include patients stopping medication due to unacceptable side effects, inadequate response, financial factors, fear of addiction, and/or belief that short-term improvement means they no longer need to continue treatment.

For more information about the Well Beyond Blue initiative, to register for the November 16, 2018 meeting (in-person or by webcast), or take the online survey, visit www.dbsalliance.org.

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The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) strives to improve the lives of people living with mood disorders. The organization fosters an environment of understanding the impact and management of these life-threatening conditions by providing up-to-date, scientifically based tools and information; supports research; and works to ensure that people living with mood disorders are treated equitably. Assisted by a scientific advisory board comprising leading researchers and clinicians in the field of mood disorders, DBSA has more than 600 peer run support groups across the country. Hundreds of thousands of people are assisted each year with in-person and online peer support; readily understandable and current information about depression and bipolar disorder; and empowering tools focused on an integrated approach to wellness.

For more information, please visit www.DBSAlliance.org or call (800) 826-3632.