

UNDERSTANDING TREATMENT-RESISTANT DEPRESSION

Patient Education

Aznive Aghababian, MS4

Ross University School of Medicine

Marjorie Caro, MD

Laiza Mendez PMHNP-BC

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

- A medical condition affecting mood, thoughts, and daily life
- Symptoms include sadness, low energy, sleep changes, loss of interest
- Depression is treatable, but treatment can take time

WHAT IS TREATMENT-RESISTANT DEPRESSION (TRD)?

- Depression that does not improve after two or more treatments
- Treatments must be taken at the right dose and for enough time
- TRD does NOT mean depression is untreatable

WHY CAN DEPRESSION BE HARD TO TREAT?

- Everyone's brain chemistry is different
- Stress, trauma, or medical conditions may affect recovery
- Side effects may limit medication options

COMMON FIRST-LINE TREATMENTS

- Antidepressant medications
- Psychotherapy
- Lifestyle support (sleep, routines, exercise)

IF INITIAL TREATMENTS DON'T WORK

- Adjust the medication dose
- Switch medications
- Combine medications
- Add therapy or other treatments

ADDITIONAL OPTIONS FOR TRD

- Medication add-ons (augmentation)
- Ketamine or esketamine
- Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS)
- Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) in severe cases

WHAT IS TMS?

- Non-invasive brain stimulation
- Targets mood-related brain areas
- Done in outpatient visits
- No anesthesia needed

WHAT IS KETAMINE / ESKETAMINE?

- Works differently than standard antidepressants
- May help symptoms improve faster
- Given with careful medical monitoring

WHAT PATIENTS CAN DO

- Take medications as prescribed
- Be open about side effects
- Keep follow-up appointments
- Ask questions and stay engaged

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Treatment-resistant depression is common
- It does not mean treatment has failed
- Many effective options exist
- There is hope, even if progress feels slow

