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Texas Health Research & Education Launches Virtual Learning Game on Women and Depression

Game helps primary care providers identify, treat and manage depression

ARLINGTON, TEXAS, Nov. 8, 2011 – Primary health care providers now have an innovative tool to help identify, treat and manage depression in women as Texas Health Research & Education Institute today launches *Women and Depression: Navigating the Clinical Course*®. The program will be launched at the U.S. Psychiatric and Mental Health Congress in Las Vegas.

Thinking outside traditional continuing medical education (CME) practices, the game represents Texas Health Research & Education's first CME-certified case-based branched learning game. Texas Health Research & Education is the research and medical education arm of Texas Health Resources, one of the nation's largest faith-based, nonprofit health systems, headquartered in Arlington, Texas.

There is no charge to participate in the game, which is aimed at all primary care physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners and psychiatrists. Eligible providers can receive CME credit for completion of the program. The game can be accessed at www.mddinwomen.com.

The game follows a patient from diagnosis to remission, with decision trees and scenario-based branching logic. The program is designed to help improve health care providers' ability to recognize, diagnose and treat major depressive disorders, and think about gender differences in presentation.

“Depression in women is common, but the majority of affected women unfortunately do not get the help they need, even when they visit their primary care provider as the depression may not be recognized,” said Dr. Leslie Secrest, psychiatrist on the medical staff of Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas and course chair of the CME learning game. “Many patient visits stem from psychosocial issues, so the early identification, treatment and ongoing management of major depression at the primary care level is more important than ever.”

The need for additional training for primary health care providers in recognizing and treating depression is heightened by a growing shortage of psychiatrists, knowledge gaps among providers in understanding depression guidelines and a failure to recognize the differences in how women and men present symptoms of depression, said Secrest.

Women and Depression: Navigating the Clinical Course places participants in a simulated face-to-face clinical appointment with Lissette Arnott[®], a 46-year-old perimenopausal woman experiencing new-onset depression. The participant makes decisions for Lissette’s clinical treatment, following her through a six-month period and deciding the types of treatment she will receive.

“Lissette is an animated, avatar-type figure who poses interesting challenges and scenarios to get health care professionals to think outside the box,” said Marilyn Peterson, director of CME for Texas Health Research & Education. “Participants will explore Lissette’s depressive symptoms, diagnostic assessment, detection and management, and co-morbidity management. The objective is early detection and appropriate management of Lissette’s treatment to create positive medical outcomes and quality of life.”

Peterson noted that the format encourages learners to look at an issue from multiple perspectives and develop decision-making abilities. It enables learners to see the consequences of their decisions, helping the experience translate to real-life situations.

“Because of the game’s interactive nature, the outcome of each action depends on the interaction of earlier actions. This independence and interdependence is created by the results of the previous actions and the situation’s response.”

This form of learning, known as branched learning, is an emerging tool that places health care providers in a simulated situation and helps them acquire decision-making and critical-thinking skills, according to Peterson.

“We’ve seen this type of learning in the military. In the CME world, we are always looking for innovative ways to connect with health care professionals. We’re really excited to combine an advanced pedagogical strategy with emerging technology and media,” said Peterson.

Women and Depression: Navigating the Clinical Course was created in conjunction with CRM Healthcare, and made possible by a grant from Pfizer.

About Texas Health Research & Education Institute

Texas Health Research & Education Institute is an independent, not-for-profit organization within Texas Health Resources. Our vision is to advance health through research and education. Accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education, Texas Health Research & Education conducts research that contributes to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease, and offers continuing medical education to physicians and other health care professionals. For more information, visit www.texashealth.org/THRE.

About Texas Health Resources

Texas Health Resources is one of the largest faith-based, nonprofit health systems in the United States. The health system includes 24 acute care and short-stay hospitals that are owned, operated, joint-ventured or affiliated with Texas Health Resources. It includes the Texas Health Presbyterian, Texas Health Arlington Memorial and Texas Health Harris Methodist hospitals, a large physician group, outpatient facilities, and home health, preventive and fitness services, and an organization for medical research and education. For more information, call 1-877-THR-WELL, or visit www.TexasHealth.org.

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