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Pfizer To Offer Free Public Access To Mental Health Assessment Tools To Improve Diagnosis And Patient Care

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(BUSINESS WIRE)--As part of its commitment to improving the quality of patient care, Pfizer today announced that it will make available assessment scales used by physicians and others in the healthcare community to support the evaluation and diagnosis of patients suffering from certain mental disorders. For the first time, these users can directly access and download the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ) and the General Anxiety Disorder questionnaire (GAD-7) without copyright restriction and at no charge, providing unprecedented access to these valuable and widely used tools for evaluating certain mental disorders.

“By providing unrestricted access, Pfizer is encouraging broader usage of these important patient assessment aids, which we know will help many healthcare providers and their patients,” said Freda C. Lewis-Hall, M.D., senior vice president and chief medical officer at Pfizer. “We are listening to the needs of the mental health community and doing what we can to provide the tools needed to make the best possible healthcare decisions.”

The PHQ and GAD scales are quick, efficient, validated methods to assist physicians in diagnosing and monitoring their patients.

PHQ-9, a widely used questionnaire, is self-administered and utilizes a scoring method to specifically measure depression-related symptoms. In less than a decade, the PHQ-9 has become commonly used by both clinicians and researchers in large federally sponsored U.S. surveys and has been adopted as a standard measure for depression risk and severity by the Veterans Administration, Department of Defense and several integrated health care systems and public health departments as well as the United Kingdom’s National Health Service.

“This is an outstanding example of how both industry and academia can work together to improve the accuracy of diagnosis and support better assessments of treatment response and outcomes,” said Darrel A. Regier, M.D., M.P.H., director, Division of Research at the American Psychiatric Association (APA). “In the United States, mental disorders are diagnosed based on the APA’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition (DSM-IV). A team of experts is currently working on the fifth edition of the manual, and the PHQ-9 is being considered as one measure to be used for assessing depression severity and treatment response.”

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, mental disorders affect an estimated 26.2 percent of Americans ages 18 and older – about one in four adults suffers from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. Major depressive disorder, which affects approximately 14.8 million American adults ages 18 and older, is the leading cause of disability in the U.S. for ages 15 to 44. Approximately 40 million American adults ages 18 and older have an anxiety disorder.

More than a decade ago, Pfizer, along with research partners Robert Spitzer, M.D. and Janet Williams, D.S.W. from Columbia University and Kurt Kroenke, M.D. from Indiana University, recognized the need for and supported the independent development of dimensional measurement tools for mental disorders to be used by health care professionals. The four original studies that validated the tools represented nearly 10,000 patients. Between 1999 and 2009, more than 560 publications on these assessment aids have been identified.

“The PHQ-9 and GAD-7 tools really are standard measures for physicians to use,” said Kurt Kroenke, M.D., one of the co-developers of the tools from the Department of Medicine, Regenstrief Institute for Health Care and Indiana University School of Medicine. “As depression and anxiety are the most common mental disorders in primary care, the PHQ and GAD instruments are important aids for making accurate diagnoses. They propose a number of scaled treatment options for physicians and patients to consider, including watchful waiting; follow-up for repeating the severity measure; counseling, follow-up and/or pharmacotherapy; and referral to a mental health specialist for psychotherapy and/or collective management, depending on the severity of the mental disorder.”

The PHQ and GAD instruments, including different variations and translations in nearly 80 languages, are available at www.phqscreeners.com. The site also provides comprehensive instruction documents, articles, a bibliography and a direct point of contact e-mail address.

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Media: Kristen Neese 212-733-8926 646-299-2526 Investor Contact: Suzanne Harnett, 212-733-8009