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Title: **ITP and Depression**

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Depression is one of the world's most common and most disabling disorders. It is the leading cause of disability among adults in high-income countries. Depression is not just being sad. We all are very sad some of the time – that's normal. Depression is a disease. Doctors should routinely screen their adult patients for depression. Diagnosis of depression is important because treatment is very effective.

Why do you need to know about depression? For the answer, we go back several years to our survey about symptoms of fatigue. Many of you participated in this survey. It was a project led by Dr. Julia Newton (Newcastle University). We thought this survey would be important because we had heard from our ITP patients that they commonly had symptoms of fatigue. Our survey confirmed that symptoms of fatigue were significantly more common in ITP patients than in the UK population. Our ITP patients in Oklahoma also participated in this survey, and the results were the same: symptoms of fatigue were significantly more common in ITP patients than in the US population. But we did not know why fatigue was a common symptom among ITP patients.

Fatigue is important because it is a symptom of depression. One of the 8 questions in the standard diagnostic depression screening questionnaire is: "Have you been bothered by feeling tired or having little energy?" This connection between fatigue and depression was why we did a survey of members of the ITP Support Association and Oklahoma ITP patients last year. We used the standard 8 question diagnostic depression screening questionnaire. The questionnaire asks if you have been bothered by symptoms of depression within the past 2 weeks. The answers can be not at all, several days, more than half the days, or nearly every day. The results of this questionnaire sent to UK and Oklahoma ITP patients were clear. Depression is a common problem among ITP patients. The Table shows the results for the 110 UK patients who completed the survey.

| Depression severity | 110 UK patients |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| None-minimal | 57 (51%) |
| Mild | 26 (24%) |
| Moderate | 17 (15%) |
| Moderately severe | 10 (9%) |
| Severe | 1 (1%) |

These 110 patients were only 11% of the 1039 ITP Support Association members who had received the survey with the June 2015 issue of The Platelet, and we assume that patients who were more concerned about depression were more likely to complete and return the survey. But still, these results are very important. 28 (25%) of the 110 patients had moderate, moderately severe, or severe depression. When the same survey had been previously given to many people who were representative of the entire UK population, only 3% of people had

symptoms of moderate, moderately severe, or severe depression. The results were the same for our Oklahoma patients. 68 (66%) of the 103 Oklahoma patients completed and returned their surveys. 11 (16%) of the 68 patients had moderate, moderately severe, or severe depression compared to the expected US frequency of 2%. The reason why the frequency of depression was not as high among Oklahoma patients may be that we repeatedly contacted our patients and urged them to return their surveys, and 66% did.

These results make us worry about our ITP patients. Depression can be a dangerous disease. It can disrupt lives and families. It is easy to ignore. Many people are reluctant to admit that they feel depressed. Many people who are depressed are told that they just need "to get over it". There is a stigma about mental illness. These are real and serious problems. In addition, talking about these symptoms with your doctor may help with avoiding medications that can have depression as a side effect, such as corticosteroids.

Our conclusion is that ITP patients need to be aware that depression happens, it can be accurately diagnosed by your doctor, and if you are depressed, there are very effective medicines. If you have little interest or pleasure in doing things, if you feel tired and have little energy most of the time, or you feel bad about yourself, that you have let yourself or your family down, you need to see your doctor and your doctor needs to evaluate you for depression. The medicines are simple, safe, and very effective.