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Press Release

AMBHA

AMERICAN MANAGED BEHAVIORAL
HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATION

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Health Plans Answer Surgeon General's Call On Mental Health

Managed Care Community Focused on Better Diagnosis and Treatment of Depression

*Model Programs Show Significant Results According to
New Report Featured in Healthplan Magazine*

Washington, D.C.— Responding to a call from U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher for improved mental health care, America's health plans report significant gains in diagnosing and treating depression, according to a report released today by the American Association of Health Plans (AAHP) and the American Managed Behavioral Healthcare Association (AMBHA). The report, *Approaches to Depression Care*, showcases model programs in place at some of the nation's top health plans.

A new report by the prestigious Institute of Medicine (IOM) said improving health care quality requires greater use of multidisciplinary teams as well as a systematized approach to treatment, precisely the elements that are producing results for patients in managed care plans.

"The IOM report urges more collaboration among health professionals and more coordinated care. *Approaches to Depression Care* (the AAHP/AMBHA report) demonstrates how health plans are putting IOM's recommendations into practice and achieving improvements," said Karen Ignagni, AAHP President and CEO.

AMBHA's Executive Director, Pamela Greenberg, added that "sharing of best practices in treating and preventing depression allows plans across the country to replicate the successes of other programs, improving care for thousands, maybe millions, of people."

The report, featured in the latest edition of *Healthplan* magazine, is part of an AAHP series called "Advancing Women's Health." The series has examined best practices in breast cancer treatment, osteoporosis/mid-life issues, domestic abuse, and prenatal care.

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Later this year, a consumer version of the report will be published featuring "10 Questions for Women to

Ask Health Plans about Programs for Diagnosing and Treating Depression.” Questions are aimed at identifying to what extent a health plan incorporates key features of the model programs showcased in *Approaches to Depression Care*:

Keystone Health Plan Central established a free, anonymous telephonic service that allows members to screen themselves for signs of depression. Available 24 hours a day, it also allows members to be transferred for further assessment and referral to a behavioral health practitioner. One key to success is giving members immediate access to care in a time of need. In a two-year period, the plan noted a 20 percent increase in the number of people with a new episode of depression who remained on their antidepressant medication for at least six months.

PacifiCare Behavioral Health, Inc. offers members telephonic depression screening and a program called “Taking Charge of Depression,” in which members receive telephonic coaching designed to enhance treatment compliance. The program is successful because members and providers alike find the program easy-to-use, engaging, and helpful. Treatment compliance has risen with each of the interventions offered.

Humana, Inc., (in cooperation with Magellan Behavioral Health) developed a program aimed at increasing the rate of detection and treatment of postpartum depression, which affects up to 15% of new mothers. Magellan mails new mothers identified by Humana through its Humana Beginning Program packets that include a screening tool, a brochure about postpartum depression, and a toll-free number for immediate care. Over 40 percent of new mothers who are identified as being at risk for depression participate in the program.

The Group Health Cooperative in Seattle has developed *Depression Roadmap* based on scientific evidence identifying and focusing on the elements of depression care that have the greatest chance of getting patients better. These guidelines promote optimal care, and help the plan identify ways to make continual improvements in the system of care. The *Roadmap* emphasizes teaching providers to make an accurate diagnosis and provide adequate follow-up using an electronic registry that alerts the provider if a patient is overdue for a visit or has stopped taking their antidepressant medication.

Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield in New Hampshire has examined barriers to successful implementation of mental health services. Anthem recently conducted a series of physician surveys, and then enlisted the support of physician leaders to identify ways to improve provider recognition of depression in their patients and to promote more appropriate use of antidepressant medications.

Kaiser Permanente spearheaded a national alliance of researchers, clinicians, advocacy groups, and business leaders that has resulted in 18 projects to develop and evaluate new models of care for depression. A nurse telecare program used inside Kaiser Permanente and now elsewhere in the country, is one of them. In a randomized trial, this nurse telecare approach, which emphasizes behavioral modification and care coordination, demonstrated significant reductions in symptoms and improvements in functioning and patient satisfaction when used in conjunction with appropriate medication.

Approaches to Depression Care is available at www.aahp.org under Patient Care, News and Newsletters.

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Depression is not a gender-specific illness, but there are important differences between men and women.

Nearly twice as many women are affected by depression each year and, over a lifetime, women are more than twice as likely as men to suffer a major depression.

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AAHP is the largest national trade organization representing HMOs, PPOs, and other similar health plans that provide coverage to more than 140 million Americans.

AMBHA represents the nation's leading managed behavioral healthcare organizations. These organizations provide insurance coverage for treatment of mental health and substance use disorders to over 110 million individuals.