# It is illegal to post this copyrighted PDF on any website. Association Between Bone Mineral Density and Depressive Symptoms in a Population-Based Sample

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between bone mineral density (BMD) and depressive symptoms in a population-based cohort.

Methods: Data were extracted from the second phase of the Dallas Heart Study (DHS-2), a large, multiethnic population sample in Dallas County, Texas, from September 1, 2007, to December 31, 2009. Depressive symptom severity was measured with the 16-item Quick Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology—Self Report (QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub>), which is derived from DSM-IV major depressive disorder criteria. BMD was measured using dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry. Multiple linear regressions examined the relationship between QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> score and BMD controlling for age, body mass index, sex, ethnicity, smoking status, alcohol use status, serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D concentration, antidepressant use, and physical activity as measured by total vigorous and moderate metabolic equivalents. Subgroup analyses explored differences related to age.

**Results:** QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> score was not a significant predictor of either lumbar spine or total hip T-score ( $\beta$ =-0.01, P=.61 and  $\beta$ =-0.02, P=.39) in the overall population (n=2,285). There was a significant negative interaction term between age and QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> group ( $\beta$ =-0.01, P=.01). In participants aged 60 years or older (n=465), QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> score was a significant predictor of BMD at the lumbar spine and total hip ( $\beta$ =-0.14, P=.003 and  $\beta$ =-0.12, P=.006, respectively).

**Conclusions:** QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> score did not significantly predict BMD in the overall DHS-2 sample. There was, however, a significant association observed in participants aged  $\geq 60$  years. Results suggest that diagnosis and treatment of depressive symptoms may be of clinical importance in older individuals, a subgroup at high risk for osteoporosis and fractures.

J Clin Psychiatry 2018;79(3):16m11276 https://doi.org/10.4088/JCP.16m11276 © Copyright 2017 Physicians Postgraduate Press, Inc.

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\*Corresponding author: E. Sherwood Brown, MD, PhD, Department of Psychiatry, UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, 5323 Harry Hines Blvd, MC 8849, Dallas, TX 75390-8849 (Sherwood.Brown@UTSouthwestern.edu). O steoporosis is a common condition defined by decreased bone strength. Affecting an estimated 10.2 million US adults in 2010 with an additional 43.4 million exhibiting low bone mass, osteoporosis presents a significant public health concern.<sup>1</sup> Patients with osteoporotic fractures accrue substantial additional direct health care costs compared to those without fractures.<sup>2</sup> In addition to monetary concerns, older patients who experience fractures are at an increased risk of death. Effects on accrual of bone density are of importance, as a lower peak bone mass increases risk of osteoporosis later in life.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the odds of falling in older adults ( $\geq 60$  years) with major depressive disorder (MDD) are greater than in people without depression.<sup>4</sup>

While many risk factors have been identified for osteoporosis, it is still unclear if MDD is a definitive risk factor. Extant evidence suggests an association between MDD and lower bone mineral density (BMD); notwithstanding, differences between studies in sample composition and design prevent firm conclusion.<sup>5</sup> A recent analysis<sup>6</sup> of 164,890 patients from a database in Taiwan demonstrated that people diagnosed with depression were 1.3 times more likely to develop osteoporosis. In agreement with a model demonstrating an association between osteoporosis and MDD, depressed patients exhibited an increased risk of fracture in a meta-analysis of cohort studies.<sup>7</sup> Significant confounders, such as the effect of concomitant antidepressants on BMD, have obscured conclusions in the face of multiple, possibly contributing physiological mechanisms (eg, hypothalamic-pituitaryadrenal axis dysregulation). Prior studies have used small patient samples, have not controlled for confounding factors, or have based conclusions regarding BMD on values assessed with ultrasound rather than dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry (DXA), sometimes on a single skeletal region. Although racial and ethnic differences in both rates of depression and BMD have been reported, these differences have not been explored, as prior studies have largely consisted of racially uniform cohorts.

We therefore conducted analyses using depressive symptoms as assessed by the 16-item Quick Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology—Self-Report (QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub>) and BMD data from the Dallas Heart Study (DHS). The DHS includes an epidemiologic sample of Dallas County, Texas, with the exception of oversampling African American persons to allow for exploration of racial differences in health outcomes and risk factors.

## METHODS

#### Participants

The DHS was designed as a representative multistage sample of individuals residing in Dallas County that was initiated July 1, 2000, and completed December 31, 2002.<sup>8</sup> African Americans were, however,

biological risk factors for cardiovascular disease within that subpopulation. Potential participants were recruited in a 1:1 ratio of African American to non-African American. Although the study was designed to look at cardiovascular risk factors in a population, the presence of preexisting heart disease was not a factor in enrollment. A second phase of the Dallas Heart Study (DHS-2) was conducted from September 1, 2007, to December 31, 2009, that was inclusive of individuals from the initial DHS as well as spouses or family members of past participants, who were included due to attrition in the first wave of the DHS (ie, DHS-1). Thus, DHS-2 was demographically slightly different from DHS-1 (eg, a greater proportion of women than men were included). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 85 years.<sup>9</sup> A more detailed description of the methods employed in the DHS has previously been published.<sup>10</sup> The study was approved by The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center Institutional Review Board, and DHS participants provided written informed consent. For more information regarding the DHS, please visit http://www.utsouthwestern. edu/research/translational-medicine/doing-research/ dallas-heart/index.html.

This cross-sectional analysis was performed on participant data extracted from DHS-2. Our study examined 3,401 individuals who had participated in DHS-2. Of these participants, 1,116 were excluded based on missing data for any of the following variables: lumbar spine, total hip BMD, age, body mass index (BMI), sex, ethnicity, smoking status, alcohol use status, serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D concentration, antidepressant use, physical activity measured by total vigorous and moderate metabolic equivalents, and QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> score.

## Variables

**Depressive symptoms.** Participants in the DHS-2 were provided with the 16-item QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> and instructed to rate specific symptoms of depression categorized on a scale from 0 to 3. Scores for each participant were summated in adherence to scoring guidelines provided at www.idsqids.org. Scoring of the QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> divides the items into depression criteria defined by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fourth Edition (*DSM-IV*), resulting in scores ranging from 0 to 27. QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> scores were divided into 3 categories of depression severity based on the total scores generated: no symptoms or mild (0–5), moderate (6–10), and severe or very severe (11 and higher). The psychometric properties of the QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> have been previously reported by Rush et al.<sup>11</sup>

**Bone mineral density.** Bone mineral density was measured at the lumbar spine, hip, and non-dominant radius using a Hologic DXA instrument during the DHS-2 clinic visit at St. Paul University Hospital in Dallas. The Hologic DXA instrument has a weight limit of 350 pounds. Therefore, BMD of participants weighing more than the 350 pounds was not measured. BMD T-scores at the lumbar spine (L1–L4) and total hip were used in the

- This study examined the relationship between bone mineral density and current depressive symptom severity, a hitherto unresolved connection, in a population-based and racially and ethnically diverse sample.
- The findings suggest that the severity of current depressive symptoms is related to bone mineral density in older people, a population at high risk for osteoporosis, falls, and fractures.

current analysis. T-scores were calculated as the number of standard deviations away from the mean for 30-year old white women irrespective of age and ethnicity, as is conventionally calculated.<sup>12</sup>

Demographic information and predictors. Demographic information was self-reported in a 54-page questionnaire administered to participants during the DHS-2 visit. Covariates of interest in our study were age, BMI, sex, ethnicity, smoking status, alcohol use status, serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D concentration, antidepressant use, and physical activity (measured as total moderate and vigorous metabolic equivalents). Self-described ethnicity was divided into the following categories: non-Hispanic African-American, non-Hispanic Caucasian, Hispanic, and other. Antidepressant use, which has been implicated in decreased BMD<sup>13</sup> and increased fall risk,<sup>14</sup> was separated into 3 categories: selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) or serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor (SNRI) use, non-SSRI/SNRI use, or no antidepressant use. Self-described smoking status was divided into the following categories: current smoker, past smoker, and never smoker. Self-reported alcohol use status was divided into the following categories: current drinker, recent abstainer, and lifetime abstainer. 25-Hydroxyvitamin D data were analyzed from blood samples taken during DHS-2 and recorded in nanograms per milliliter (SI conversion factor for ng/mL to mmol/L: 2.49). The Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis questionnaire was used to document usual activities performed by participants in a week (for more information regarding the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis questionnaire, please visit https://www.mesa-nhlbi.org). Physically demanding activities were then converted to metabolic equivalents (MET) using the Compendium of Physical Activities<sup>15</sup> and recorded as MET × (min/wk). BMI was calculated from body measurements taken at the UT Southwestern St. Paul facilities using the following formula: weight (kg)/height <sup>s</sup>quared (m<sup>2</sup>).

# **Statistical Analysis**

Demographic characteristics of DHS-2 subjects were summarized as mean (SD) or as proportions when indicated. Categorical variables were compared with  $\chi^2$  tests, whereas continuous variables were compared with independent *t* tests in IBM SPSS Statistics version 23.0.<sup>16</sup> Multiple linear regressions were then run to examine the relationship between depressive symptoms and BMD. Spine T-scores and total hip T-scores were set as dependent

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**It is illegal to post t** variables in 2 separate analyses (see Table 2). In each analysis, predictor variables consisted of the following: age, BMI, sex, ethnicity, smoking status, alcohol use status, serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D concentration, antidepressant use, total moderate and vigorous MET score, and QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> group. To examine the impact age and sex had on the relationship between depression and bone density, separate moderation models were run using the PROCESS macro by Andrew F. Hayes.<sup>17</sup>

Specifically, the interaction between age and QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> group was examined with spine T-scores as the dependent variable and the same model was repeated examining the interaction between sex and QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> igroup. Whereas results justified a subgroup regression on participants  $\geq 60$ years of age to explore differences related to age, results did not justify exploration of male and female subgroups or sex-specific covariates (eg, menopausal status, estrogen supplementation).

#### RESULTS

Participants included in the final sample were significantly different from those excluded on some characteristics, including BMI, sex, ethnicity, serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D concentration, and total moderate and vigorous MET. Descriptive characteristics of the sample used in each analysis are detailed in Table 1.

Predictors accounted for 12.5% and 30.0% of variance observed in spine and total hip T-scores, respectively ( $R^2 = 0.125$ , P < .001 and  $R^2 = 0.300$ , P < .001). Age, BMI, and ethnicity significantly predicted for spine T-score. Age, BMI, ethnicity, smoking status, SSRI or SNRI use, and physical activity measured by total moderate and vigorous MET significantly predicted for total hip T-score. QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> group was, however, not a significant predictor of either spine ( $\beta = -0.011$ , P = .61) or total hip T-scores ( $\beta = -0.016$ , P = .39) in the sample as a whole. Multiple regression results are shown in Table 2.

The interaction term between age and QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> group was significant and negative ( $\beta = -0.0111$ , P = .01), suggesting that increasing age strengthens the relationship between QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> score and BMD. The interaction term between sex and QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> score was not significant in the

convrighted PDF Table 1. Characteristics of DHS-2 Participants Included in and Excluded From the Analysis<sup>a</sup>

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	Participants Included ( $n = 2.285$ )		Participants Excluded (n = $1.116$ ) <sup>b</sup>		
Variable	n	%	n	%	P Value
Sex					.007
Male	894	39.1	430	44.2	
Female	1,391	60.9	543	55.8	
Ethnicity					.037
Non-Hispanic African American	1,180	51.6	480	49.9	
Non-Hispanic white	719	31.5	345	35.9	
Hispanic	339	14.8	115	12.0	
Other	47	2.1	21	2.2	
Antidepressants					.266
Yes	242	10.6	116	11.9	
SSRI/SNRI	192				
Non-SSRI/SNRI	50				
No	2,043	89.4	857	88.1	
QIDS-SR <sub>16</sub> score					.582
None or mild (>0 but $\leq 6$ )	1,550	67.8	642	66.0	
Moderate (>6 but ≤ 10)	465	20.4	208	21.4	
Severe or very severe (> 10 but $\leq$ 27)	270	11.8	123	12.6	
Smoking status					.874
Current smoker	522	22.8	220	23.5	
Past smoker	508	22.2	211	22.5	
Never smoker	1,255	54.9	505	54.0	
Alcohol use status					.238
Current drinker	1,604	70.2	626	67.2	
Recent abstainer	481	21.1	215	23.1	
Lifetime abstainer	200	8.8	91	9.8	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Age, v	49.8	10.9	50.2	11.7	.352
Body mass index	30.7	6.6	32.4	9.1	<.001
Serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D concentration	43.4	21.9	41.5	21.3	.004
Physical activity (MET × [min/wk])	8,886.7	11,483.0	7,634.0	10,343.8	.004

<sup>a</sup>A total of 2,285 participants were analyzed and compared to 962 excluded participants. x<sup>2</sup> Tests were used for all categorical variables, whereas independent t tests were used for continuous variables.

<sup>b</sup>The total number of participants excluded (n) changes as a result of missing data.

Abbreviations: MET = metabolic equivalents, QIDS- $SR_{16}$  = 16-item Quick Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology—Self Report, SNRI = serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor,

SSRI = selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor.

entire sample or in participants aged  $\geq 60$  years ( $\beta = .018$ , P = .85 and  $\beta = .160$ , P = .51, respectively).

In a separate multiple regression analysis on participants with age  $\geq 60$ years (Table 3), predictors accounted for 15.2% and 26.2% of variance observed in spine and total hip T-scores, respectively ( $R^2 = 0.152$ , P < .001and  $R^2 = 0.262$ , P < .001). In this older subgroup, the QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> score was a significant predictor of BMD as measured by spine and total hip T-scores  $(\beta = -0.138, P = .003 \text{ and } \beta = -0.117, P = .006).$ 

#### DISCUSSION

In the large, multiethnic, population-based DHS-2 sample, depressive symptoms did not significantly predict BMD T-score at the lumbar spine and total hip after adjusting for covariates. However, in individuals over the age of 60 years, depressive symptoms were associated with a lower BMD T-score at the spine and total hip. Our results in the older population align with a recent meta-analysis<sup>18</sup> and implicate the clinical management of depressed elderly patients, as this population is especially prone to fracture.

The cross-sectional nature of the DHS-2 limits conclusions regarding direct causality of MDD on lower BMD in older individuals, but past research has provided possible mechanistic support for a relationship.

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	ß (standardized		95% Confidence Interval		
Predictor Variable ( $n = 2,285$ )	coefficient)	P Value	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
BMD in spine (T-score); R <sup>2</sup> = 0.125, P < .001					
QIDS-SR <sub>16</sub> score	-0.011	.609	-0.105	0.062	
Age	-0.096	<.001	-0.018	-0.007	
Sex	-0.026	.211	-0.196	0.043	
Ethnicity	-0.224	<.001	-0.474	-0.329	
Body mass index	0.222	<.001	0.040	0.057	
SSRI/SNRI	-0.031	.127	-0.364	0.045	
Non-SSRI/SNRI	0.025	.201	-0.132	0.627	
Smoking status	0.020	.330	-0.035	0.105	
Alcohol use status	-0.020	.319	-0.134	0.044	
Physical activity (MET×[min/wk])	-0.006	.780	0.000	0.000	
Serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D concentration	-0.008	.692	-0.003	0.002	
BMD in hip (T-score); <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> =0.300, <i>P</i> <.001					
QIDS-SR <sub>16</sub> score	-0.016	.394	-0.086	0.034	
Age	-0.228	<.001	-0.028	-0.020	
Sex	0.022	.234	-0.034	0.139	
Ethnicity	-0.171	<.001	-0.299	-0.194	
Body mass index	0.448	<.001	0.073	0.086	
SSRI/SNRI	-0.055	.002	-0.379	-0.083	
Non-SSRI/SNRI	-0.015	.395	-0.394	0.155	
Smoking status	0.062	.001	0.036	0.137	
Alcohol use status	-0.022	.232	-0.103	0.025	
Physical activity (MET×[min/wk])	0.048	.008	0.000	0.000	
Serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D concentration	-0.019	.328	-0.003	0.001	

<sup>a</sup>Multiple linear regressions were performed on 2,285 participants  $\geq$  18 years of age for spine BMD and hip BMD.  $\beta$  Is a standardized coefficient. Confidence intervals given are related to an unstandardized coefficient.

Abbreviations: BMD = bone mineral density, MET = metabolic equivalents, QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> = 16-item Quick Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology—Self Report, SNRI = serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor, SSRI = selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor.

	β (standardized		95% Confidence Interval		
Predictor Variable	coefficient)	P Value	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
BMD in spine (T-score); R <sup>2</sup> = 0.152, P < .001					
QIDS-SR <sub>16</sub> score	-0.138	.003	-0.574	-0.122	
Age	-0.026	.559	-0.044	0.024	
Sex	0.186	<.001	0.313	0.908	
Ethnicity	-0.177	<.001	-0.595	-0.192	
Body mass index	0.262	<.001	0.044	0.094	
SSRI/SNRI	0.019	.669	-0.381	0.593	
Non-SSRI/SNRI	0.117	.009	0.238	1.636	
Smoking status	-0.019	.678	-0.243	0.158	
Alcohol use status	0.028	.534	-0.138	0.267	
Physical activity (MET × [min/wk])	-0.012	.795	0.000	0.000	
Serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D concentration	-0.011	.806	-0.008	0.006	
BMD in hip (T-score); R <sup>2</sup> =0.262, P<.001					
QIDS-SR <sub>16</sub> score	-0.117	.006	-0.377	-0.063	
Age	-0.105	.011	-0.054	-0.007	
Sex	0.090	.037	0.013	0.427	
Ethnicity	-0.213	<.001	-0.492	-0.212	
Body mass index	0.411	<.001	0.064	0.098	
SSRI/SNRI	-0.003	.951	-0.349	0.328	
Non-SSRI/SNRI	0.030	.467	-0.306	0.666	
Smoking status	0.064	.144	-0.035	0.243	
Alcohol use status	-0.048	.262	-0.221	0.060	
Physical activity (MET×[min/wk])	0.012	.767	0.000	0.000	
Serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D concentration	-0.047	.277	-0.007	0.002	

# Table 3. Predictors of Bone Mineral Density in Participants Aged $\geq$ 60 Years (n = 465) by Multiple Linear Regression<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Multiple linear regressions were performed on 465 participants ≥60 years of age for spine BMD and hip BMD, β Is a standardized coefficient. Confidence intervals given are related to an unstandardized coefficient.

Abbreviations: BMD = bone mineral density, MET = metabolic equivalents,  $QIDS-SR_{16} = 16$ -item Quick Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology—Self Report, SNRI = serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor, SSRI = selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor.

is illegal to post this copy chronic state of stress that is characteristic of MDD is known to elevate cortisol and catecholamines by way of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis. Cortisol has a direct effect on osteoblasts, decreasing bone formation activity.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, inflammatory markers such as interleukin-6, C-reactive protein, and tumor necrosis factor-a, which have been shown to be elevated in MDD, have concomitant stimulatory effects on osteoclasts.<sup>19-21</sup> The nuanced effects of age on bone formation and resorption are unclear, but their increasing imbalance with age places the elderly population at higher risk for low BMD. It is possible that a preexisting imbalance may amplify the effects of any neurochemical imbalances related to MDD that would otherwise be buffered. The pathophysiologic concepts presented may provide some basis for why participant age moderated the effect of depressive symptoms on BMD. Another possibility is that more sedentary lifestyle patterns related to depressive symptoms, such as decreased physical activity,<sup>22</sup> decreased exposure to sunlight, or increased tobacco or alcohol use, might contribute to decreased BMD in older persons. However, when smoking status, alcohol use status, serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D concentration, and physical activity were controlled for, the relationship between depressive symptom severity and BMD remained significant in participants aged  $\geq$  60 years. Some evidence suggests that use of SSRIs may be associated with decreased BMD.<sup>13</sup> In the current analysis, the relationship between depressive symptoms and BMD in individuals aged  $\geq$  60 years remained significant and negative after controlling for antidepressant use.

There are several methodological aspects to this study that limit inferences and interpretations that can be made. The gold standard for MDD diagnosis is a structured diagnostic interview.<sup>23</sup> Our analyses, however, relied on measurement of depressive symptom severity using the self-report QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> rather than an actual diagnosis of MDD. Although the QIDS-SR<sub>16</sub> items are derived from *DSM-IV*, it is not a clinical diagnostic instrument for MDD. There was also no recorded duration of depressive symptoms available in the DHS-2. Longer or shorter durations of depressive symptoms may produce differing levels of effects on BMD considering proposed mechanisms. Another area of limitation in this

study was in the analysis of antidepressant data. Data from the DHS-2 did not provide the duration of antidepressant use. A number of dietary factors, including calcium and protein intake, are well-known determinants of bone mineral density and osteoporosis risk.<sup>24</sup> Nutrition and various dietary compounds have been implicated in the onset, maintenance, and severity of depressive disorders.<sup>25</sup> Diet, however, was not assessed in the DHS. A self-report metric for physical activity was used in this study. The reliability of self-reported physical activity assessments has been previously questioned and may be an additional limitation.<sup>26</sup> A strength of the study is the large and ethnically diverse sample. To our knowledge, it is the largest multiethnic analysis to date that has explored the relationship between BMD (as measured by DXA) and depressive symptoms while controlling for multiple covariates. Many prior studies have not quantified BMD with data from DXA instrumentation.<sup>6,27–30</sup> Those that have used DXA have been fairly homogeneous in terms of either ethnicity or age.18,31

#### CONCLUSION

In our sample extracted from the DHS-2, depressive symptoms were not associated with BMD quantified by either spine or total hip T-scores. Depressive symptoms did, however, negatively affect both spine and total hip T-scores in participants  $\geq$  60 years old. Our results suggest depression may be a risk factor for lower BMD in individuals  $\geq 60$  years old, a population that is particularly vulnerable to osteoporosis. The findings suggest that it may be important to screen for depressive symptoms in older patients to potentially decrease the risk of osteoporosis and fractures. Subsequent monitoring and treatment of symptoms in older patients may be essential to healthy BMD and reduced fracture risk. It is important to note, however, that, to our knowledge, no data are yet available suggesting that antidepressant treatment improves BMD or decreases the risk of fractures. In fact, antidepressants may even increase fall risk in the elderly, and certain types have been shown to decrease BMD.<sup>13,14</sup> Research is needed on the impact of antidepressant and psychosocial treatments for depression, as well as standard treatments for osteoporosis prevention, on BMD in elderly depressed persons.

Submitted: October 11, 2016; accepted January 17, 2017.

#### Published online: August 22, 2017.

Potential conflicts of interest: Dr Brown reports grants from Forest and Sunovion and personal fees from Genentech. Dr McIntyre reports grants from Stanley Medical Research Institute, Lundbeck, JanssenOrtho, Shire, Purdue, AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Otsuka, and Allergan. Dr McIntyre serves on the advisory board for and collects speaking fees from Lundbeck, Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Eli Lilly, JanssenOrtho, Purdue, Johnson & Johnson, Moksha8, Sunovion, Mitsubishi, Takeda, Forest, Otsuka, Bristol-Myers Squibb, and Shire. Drs Maalouf and Van Enkevort and Mr Hlis have no conflicts of interest.

**Funding/support:** This work was supported in part by grant UL1TR001105 from the National Center for Advancing Translational Science, National Institutes of Health. **Role of the sponsor:** The supporters had no role in the design, analysis, interpretation, or publication of this study.

**Disclaimer:** The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the Center for Translational Medicine, The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and its affiliated academic and health care centers, the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, or the National Institutes of Health.

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