

Think about this: “I just came to know that my client was declined due to depression! Who is not depressed in this economy for one reason or another? Common, she looks great and she is the president of the local women’s club in our area and they all just love her. My wife, who is a member of the club, has not seen this woman depressed or anything.....I am just confused as to why the underwriter would think so! Can you do something about this?”

When I had this conversation with an agent some days ago, I could empathize with some of his feelings. What we all have to consider is that “client’s appearance/s of being or not being healthy and active is not the only indicator of everything being ok or not ok”.

Depression is affecting a lot of people but it has also been noted that people get hooked to depression medication and are on it for years. Depressed clients have chances of increased mortality due to natural and accidental causes.

What do many underwriters consider?

1. **Severity of depression:** Is it mild, moderate or severe? Severe cases (associated with violent outbursts, suicide attempts, episodes of hospitalization, substance abuse, etc) are usually a decline. Moderate cases might be table rated based on medical records. Mild depression (no history of hospitalization and treated with therapy) might be considered a standard risk.
2. **Was the depression situational?** Postpartum depression, depression associated with spouse passing away, child’s death, etc for a certain period of time, usually 6 months after the event is given special consideration. For example, a client who suffered from post partum depression for about 6 months and was off all medication for at least one year at time of applying for insurance coverage could qualify for preferred with some insurance carriers. If the same client is on medication 18months after giving birth, then she might be standard at best.
3. **If the client was diagnosed within 1 year,** case might be postponed or client might be heavily rated depending on the company.

The treatment and rating of a case depends on the insurance company’s underwriting guidelines and it is suggested that if agent has prior knowledge of client’s depression, a depression questionnaire be filled out for a preliminary offer.

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