

identified manifestations include a sad face; tearfulness; irritability; and withdrawal from previously enjoyed activities and relationships. The child tends to spend more time in solitary activities and schoolwork is impaired. Sleeplessness or hypersomnia, changes in appetite or weight (either increased or decreased), constipation, tiredness, and nonspecific complaints of not feeling well are common reactions.

More serious and less common are depressive responses to more chronic stress and loss. These are frequently observed in children with chronic illness or disability. The manifestations are similar to those seen in acute reactions. Major depressive disorders in childhood have a number of similarities with several other psychological disorders.

### **Therapeutic Management**

Depressed children are managed by a health team that is specially trained in the care of children with mental disorders. Treatment is highly individualized and undertaken in the least restrictive environment. Suicidal children are admitted to the hospital for protection if the family is unable to provide constant monitoring. Hospitalization may also be advised for children with associated disruptive behavior, such as fighting with peers or family. Most therapeutic regimens focus on various combinations of counseling, psychotherapy, family therapy, cognitive therapy, education (teaching social and life skills that facilitate coping), environmental improvement, and pharmacotherapy.

Pharmacotherapy may involve tricyclic antidepressants or selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), such as sertraline (Zoloft), paroxetine (Paxil), bupropion (Wellbutrin), or venlafaxine (Effexor). There have been reports that antidepressant medications may cause increased suicidal thinking and behaviors in pediatric patients. This prompted the US Food and Drug Administration to require black box drug labeling detailing potential suicide-related risks for pediatric patients.

### **Nursing Care Management**

Nurses should be aware that depression is a problem that can be easily overlooked in children and one that can interrupt normal growth and development. Recognizing depression and making