

## Melancholia as a Useful Subtype of Major Depression

**To the Editor:** The article by McGrath et al<sup>1</sup> in the December 2008 issue of the *Journal* yielded the interesting finding that melancholia may be significantly associated with a reduced probability of remission from major depression. I am writing to point out a related finding from the National Institute of Mental Health Collaborative Depression Study. Our group examined major depressive disorder and tachyphylaxis, which refers to the phenomenon in which depressed patients who are successfully treated with an antidepressant eventually suffer a recurrent episode of major depression despite maintenance pharmacotherapy. In our study,<sup>2</sup> the risk of tachyphylaxis was significantly elevated among subjects who recovered from an episode of melancholic major depressive disorder. Thus, it appears that patients with melancholia have worse outcomes compared to those without melancholia.

### REFERENCES

1. McGrath PJ, Khan AY, Trivedi MH, et al. Response to a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (citalopram) in major depressive disorder with melancholic features: a STAR\*D report. *J Clin Psychiatry*. 2008;69(12):1847-1855.
2. Solomon DA, Leon AC, Mueller TI, et al. Tachyphylaxis in unipolar major depressive disorder. *J Clin Psychiatry*. 2005;66(3):283-290.

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Dr McGrath was shown this letter and declined to comment.

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