Stephanie Lichtman-Price lives in Maryland with her two children and works part-time as a professional musician and piano teacher. Diagnosed with depression 10 years ago, Stephanie is understandably protective of her improved mental health. Although she has not had a major depressive episode in two years, she continues to take medication to prevent one. “I do well as long as I don’t let myself get too stressed,” she says.

Over the years, research led to improved drugs for depression with fewer side effects and Stephanie says she is thankful for the better quality of life she enjoys as a result. Better medicines in combination with therapy allowed her to conquer severe symptoms that plagued her for years.

Stephanie does worry about her children and their mental wellness. “Research about depression has shown that it can run in families. So I watch my kids for any signs,” she says. She hopes that researchers can discover the underlying causes of depression so that future generations can live free of this chronic and debilitating disease.
The Bottom Line:
The physical and psychological symptoms of depressive illnesses impair performance in school and at work, can destroy lives and families, and are extremely costly to society. Research is needed to uncover the genetic, chemical and environmental factors that lead to depression so that doctors and other health care professionals can better diagnose, treat and ultimately prevent depression.

Hope for the Future:
- New and emerging technologies — such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) — allow researchers to detect subtle changes in brain function that may be associated with depressive diseases.
- By tracking these changes in brain function, physicians may learn how to distinguish among different forms of depression, thereby increasing the likelihood of developing more effective medicines to prevent and treat various forms of depressive diseases.
- Thanks to the Human Genome Project, medical scientists are starting to identify genes that predispose people to depressive and other brain diseases. Identification of genes associated with inherited forms of depression will open the door to new and more powerful therapies. Investment in research is the best way to assure a healthier future for ourselves and our children.

Public willing to pay more for prescription drugs
Would you be willing to pay $1 more for each prescription drug if you were certain that all the money would be spent for additional research?

- Willing to pay more: 4%
- Not willing to pay more: 33%
- Don’t know: 63%

SOURCE: U.S. SURGEON GENERAL DAVID SATCHER, MD, PHD MENTAL HEALTH: A REPORT OF THE SURGEON GENERAL

Number of Suicides in 2001

SOURCE: NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

For additional information contact the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill at 1-800-950-NAMI (6264); www.nami.org.