



TODAY IN 1867

Secretary of State William H. Seward reached agreement with Russia to purchase Alaska for \$7.2 million, a deal ridiculed as "Seward's Folly."

MONDAY
MARCH 30, 2009 **A3**

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Depression screening for all teens urged

Panel: Doctors can use questionnaire

By **Lindsey Tanner**
Associated Press

CHICAGO — An influential, government-appointed medical panel is urging doctors to routinely screen all American teens for depression — a bold step that acknowledges that nearly 2 million teens are affected by this debilitating condition.

Most are undiagnosed and untreated, said the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, which sets guidelines for doctors on a host of health issues.

Its recommendations appear in April's issue of the journal *Pediatrics*. And they go farther than the American Academy of Pediatrics' own guidance for teen depression screening.

An estimated 6 percent of U.S.

teenagers are clinically depressed. Evidence shows that detailed but simple questionnaires can accurately diagnose depression in primary-care settings such as a pediatrician's office.

The task force said that when followed by treatment, including psychotherapy, screening can help improve symptoms and help kids cope. Because depression can lead to persistent sadness, social isolation, school problems and even suicide, screening to treat it early is crucial, the panel said.

The task force's new guidance goes beyond the pediatrics academy, which advises pediatricians to ask teen patients questions about depression. Other doctor groups advise screening only high-risk youngsters.

The group recommends research-tested screening tests even for kids without symptoms. It cited two questionnaires that focus on depression tip-offs, such as mood, anxiety, appetite and substance

abuse.

Dr. Ned Calonge, task force chairman and chief medical officer for Colorado's Department of Public Health and Environment, stressed that the panel does not want its advice to lead to drug treatment alone, particularly antidepressants that have been linked with increased risks for suicidal thoughts. Routine depression testing should only occur if psychotherapy is also readily available, the panel said. Calonge said screening once yearly likely would be enough.

Treating clots

Statin drugs, taken by millions of Americans to lower cholesterol and prevent heart disease, also can cut the risk of developing dangerous blood clots that can lodge in the legs or lungs, a major study suggests.

The results provide a new reason for many people with normal cholesterol to consider taking

these medicines, sold as Crestor, Lipitor, Zocor and in generic form, doctors say.

In the study published online yesterday by the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Crestor cut in half the risk of blood clots in people with low cholesterol but high scores on a test for inflammation, which plays a role in many diseases. This same big study last fall showed that Crestor dramatically lowered rates of heart attacks, death and stroke in these people, who are not usually given statins.

"It might make some people who are on the fence decide to go on statins," although blood-clot prevention is not the drugs' main purpose, said Dr. Mark Hlatky, a Stanford University cardiologist who had no role in the study.

Many doctors have been uncomfortable with expanding statin use to people with normal cholesterol because so many would have to be treated to prevent a single additional case.