



Managing Mental Health with Therapy and Medication Management

Below is some important information I wanted to relay as you embark on managing your Mental Health Care.

Since you have been diagnosed with a Clinical Mood or Anxiety issue requiring psychotropic medication, it is important for you know how to care for your mental health and understand the role of the various providers. The optimum management of mental health care is through medication management and therapy.

Why do you need both? If you have been prescribed psychotropic medications, a clinician has determined that your clinical symptoms may not improve without a medication intervention. Psychotropic medication may reduce some of the physical symptoms of both anxiety and depression. However, medication alone is not enough. Depending on your diagnosis and individual manifestation of symptoms, medications can assist with helping you reach a baseline level of symptoms. However, this does not mean that your mood will not fluctuate with environmental triggers and daily life stressors. In addition, you may have had an underlying Mood Disorder but were unaware until you were faced with loss, trauma, or specific conflict. Particularly, individuals who have struggled with drug or alcohol abuse may have had an underlying Mood Disorder.

What will therapy help with? Therapy will assist in the education around your clinical condition and symptoms, identifying triggers, and learning how to better manage your symptoms with daily life modifications. Talk therapy will help improve interpersonal relationships, insight, and overall emotional communication. You may feel stable for a period of time, but when a relationship or difficult life challenge presents itself, you may again experience symptoms. This does not mean that you have become “immune” to your medication or that “it has stopped working”. This expectation about psychotropic medication is commonly misunderstood. It is in these instances, that talk therapy is most helpful. It is possible that you may not be taking the appropriate dosage of your medication or that you have symptom changes that are a result of environmental triggers. This is to be expected as managing your medication will be an ongoing process. Talk therapy will assist in determining biological vs. environmental triggers and how they may coincide.

We have now entered an unprecedented exciting time in psychiatric care. Psychiatric Genomic Testing is now both available and affordable. You have the option to negate months of guess work and symptoms by simply taking a swab test, which will indicate the list of all psychiatric medications and the level of risk for effectiveness and symptoms. The interpretation of this testing from a well-trained Psychiatrist or Nurse Practitioner is also important. I strongly encourage all patients to undergo this testing as it will provide a more accurate understanding of how you may metabolize medications and provide a more accurate pathway to choosing the appropriate medication for you. In addition, this testing shows interactions, and potential risks with alcohol, marijuana, and prescription drugs.

How does this all work? Who can distribute medication and who can do talk therapy?

Medication - Psychiatrists with an MD, Mental Health Nurse Practitioners (ARNP or PMHNP) who have completed additional psychiatric training, and Primary Care Physicians. However, please note that it is not recommended to receive medication from a Primary Care Physician.

Talk Therapy - Talk therapy is performed by Clinical Psychologists, Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, and Mental Health Counselors. Some Psychiatrists have additional training and will perform talk therapy, but it is less common.

Typically, your therapist and Psychiatrist or Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner will work hand-in-hand to discuss progress and any changes in mood. You will see your Psychiatrist or Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner on a monthly, bi-monthly or every several months depending on your case.

It is important to communicate information to your service care providers. Encouraging your treatment team to communicate regarding your psychiatric care will lead the most optimum treatment outcomes.

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