

The Role of the Mental Health Professional in Psychopharmacological Intervention Program Transcript

[MUSIC PLAYING]

JASON PATTON: One of my clients needs psychopharmacological medication. We're counselors. Why would we support medication if we're counseling?

There are a few major reasons why clients benefit from a combination of both counseling and medication to treat their mental health symptoms. Medication might provide the boost the client needs to get over that initial hump to really begin the process of counseling. Additionally, a client may be a danger to him or herself, or others. Clients may also be in such a debilitating state that medication is the only way to turn their condition around.

Several diagnoses are so severe that medication is truly necessary. Clients undergoing combined treatment often have better outcomes and longer lasting treatment results. In order to meet our clients' needs, therefore, clients must collaborate with other mental health professionals in order to meet some of our clients' needs.

What does the term collaborative care mean? How about integrative care? Essentially, these terms refer to efforts across medical, mental, allied, and other health paradigms to meet the needs of patients and clients. Research suggests that collaborative care meets clients health needs quickly, positively, and effectively, with less follow-up care necessary.

Counselors serve important roles on these teams when clients have mental health care needs that warrant medication management, hospitalization, or some advanced level of care. Given the appropriate permissions, counselors have the opportunity to learn information in the process of client treatment that might have otherwise not have been available to mental health care professionals. Other counselors are privy to information that clients might intentionally or unintentionally fail to communicate to their other health professionals, as well.

For example, a client discusses abusing her or his anti-anxiety medication without telling her or his doctor. Here, she might be afraid that the physician would stop offering this prescription if they were to disclose that information. How might a counselor act on one of these teams? She or he may be an organizer, a participant, or a consultant.

In the most engaged of these scenarios, counselors may be present for every meeting and facilitate every discussion involving the client. However, in most cases, counselors engage one-on-one with psychiatrists, prescribing physicians,

psychologists, and social workers. One important part of this is the counselor's ability to speak the language of the constituents with whom she or he works. This course represents an important step in the process of learning how to converse with other professionals in this language.

As you move forward, pay particular attention to any areas in which you might have had less experience and might be more likely to have blind spots. These blind spots could potentially lead to some ethical issues. Remember, the most important thing for you to learn about psychopharmacology relates to the limits of your sphere of competence and scopes of practice. Good fortune as you move forward.

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