



Psychiatrists as Prescribers Versus Holistic Providers of Mental Health Treatment



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Introduction

With the many recent advances in the pharmacological treatment of psychiatric conditions. The pharmaceutical industry has been vigorous in promoting their products as being very effective intervention for the treatment of mental and psychiatric conditions. Health insurance companies have also been very restrictive in reimbursing psychiatrists for their clinical services if they do not prescribe medications for their patients' treatment [1]. As a result, many psychiatrists have been pressured to limit their scope of practice to prescribing medications and have been labeled as prescribers as opposed to being physicians who specialize in providing comprehensive and holistic mental health treatment to patients who suffer from psychiatric conditions [2]. The purpose of this commentary is to redefine the role of psychiatrists not just as prescribers but as providers of their time honored calling as holistic healer of mental illness.

Psychiatry and its Definition

Psychiatry derives its origin from both Greek and Latin. With psychiatry, literally meant "a healing of the soul," and the Latinized form of Greek psyche which meant "mind", "Psych" " breath", "life", or "soul" [3]. The modern term "Psychiatry" was first coined by the German physician Johann Christian Reil in 1808 which literally means the "medical treatment of the soul" [4].

The Benefits and Perils of Psychopharmacology

Psychopharmacology is an important part of overall psychiatric care. Given the important role psychotropic medications play in treatment and in improving mental patients life, however the knowledge of their indications, actions and adverse effects should rank alongside the therapeutic skills that are required for essential non psychopharmacological interventions. Psychiatrists as physicians who prescribe psychiatric medications have a greater depth and breadth of knowledge and expertise in psychopharmacology based on their extensive training in their field compared to their non-psychiatrically trained physicians and in that capacity they could provide expert opinions and effective consultation to their primary care colleagues who treat many

patients with primary psychiatric disorders. As physicians they could also assume a leadership role in helping non physicians' mental health professionals understand the medical basis of diagnosing and treating psychiatric disorders with the various classes of psychopharmacological agents [5]. As such psychiatrists have a unique and unequivocal role in the treatment of mental illness since they are the only medical doctors who specialize in the treatment of psychiatric conditions and the only mental health professionals who are physicians [6]. Given that important role it would be counterintuitive to pressure psychiatrists to a reductionist role of only prescribing medications. If psychiatrists are limited in their scope of practice and reduced in their role to just one aspect of their acumen and transformed to become prescribers of psychiatric medications then that would signal the end and the demise of the psychiatric profession as a specialized field of medical practice, because pharmaceutical companies would discover newer effective psychopharmacological agents with minimal adverse effects that could be easily administered and could be prescribed by any physician and when this time arise, psychiatrists would become obsolete physicians and psychiatry would join other medical specialties [7] who were swept away with the march of history such as Leeches, Blood Letting, Barber-Surgeons, and Insulin Shock Therapy.

Psychiatrists as Holistic Healers of the Mind

"Mens sana in corpore sano" is a Latin phrase, usually translated as "a healthy mind in a healthy body". Since mental illness affects the mind, the body and the spirit of the individuals who suffer from its consequences. It is of paramount importance for psychiatrists to be holistic healers of their patients mind so that they regain not just their mental health but also their physical well being and their spiritual fulfillment to be able to experience a meaningful and a purpose driven life [8]. To achieve this time honored mission psychiatrists need to advocate on behalf of their patients to assure that all of them have adequate food, shelter and medical care. They also need to be an integral part of integrated and comprehensive interdisciplinary mental health treatment team that support

the mentally ill in establishing meaningful interpersonal and social relationships. Psychiatrists as students of the humanities, philosophy, psychology, human development, medicine, arts, sciences and faith [9], need to cement their therapeutic alliance with their patients to encourage their pursuit of rewarding vocations and if employment become prohibitive or stressful, then they need to help and assist in unleashing their patients creative potential in their artistic talents by tapping in writing, composing or playing music, painting and many other creative endeavors.

In addition psychiatrists need to play an essential role as healers of their patient mind by providing a comprehensive treatment approach that combine pharmacological treatment with psychological, social and spiritual interventions [9] with the ultimate goal of regaining hope in living every day with its fullest potential and preventing past emotional hurts and pains from encroaching on the daily purposeful living. To regain hope in a bright future, psychiatrists need to equip their patients equipping them with the skills that are necessary to counteract their tendency to predict future painful outcomes that could precipitate a worsening in their psychiatric symptoms.

Conclusion

Psychiatry is the branch of medicine that focuses on the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental, emotional and behavioral disorders. By education and training psychiatrists are physicians that specialize in mental health, including substance use disorders. Psychiatrists are qualified to assess both the mental and physical aspects of the biological, the psychological and the social contexts that are causing, precipitating or perpetuating mental distress which is expressed or manifested in psychiatric symptoms. Based on their training and acquired clinical expertise psychiatrists

need to reassert their missions as healer of the mind, body and soul that is affected by mental illness. It is the time honored calling of every psychiatrist to advocate for the total well being of their patients and to resist the current trends of reducing the psychiatrist role to that of a psychiatric medication prescriber.

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