

# Medication Management Approaches in Psychiatry

Implementation Resource Kit



DRAFT VERSION  
2003

## Information for Consumers

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*A systematic approach to the use of medications to treat severe mental illnesses*

### What are the basic elements of MedMAP?

- ▶ *A systematic approach.* A helpful and effective method for choosing medication based on research.
- ▶ *Measurement of outcomes.* Carefully watching the results from taking medication and changing it when the results are not what they should be or side effects are troublesome.
- ▶ *Documentation.* Keeping useful records about medication choices and results to guide future health care decisions.
- ▶ *Consumer involvement.* Consumer involvement and shared decision-making about medication.

Medications are a part of the recovery process for most people diagnosed with severe mental illnesses. The questions and answers below contain information about the Evidence-Based Practice MedMAP and the use of medications as a part of the treatment for schizophrenia. In the near future, we hope to expand MedMAP to include the medication treatments for other mental illnesses.

MedMAP provides guidelines and step-by-step methods (algorithms) that were developed using research and evidence to help agencies, practitioners, and consumers reach the best possible recovery results.

## **Will guidelines and/or a step-by-step approach to prescribing medications support my recovery?**

Research has shown that many consumers are either under or over medicated and are not at an optimal level of medication that would help them in the recovery process. MedMAP can really help. Because you and your practitioner will be keeping an eye on the effectiveness as well as the symptoms and side effects that you may have, you will not stay on a medication that is not working well for you. If you are not doing as well as you would like, you and your practitioner will look at the next steps and decide what, given your personal circumstances, might work better for you.

## **What can I expect with this approach to medication management?**

With the decision that you and your practitioner make, you can expect to try an antipsychotic medication for at least 4 weeks to determine if it will work for you. When you are beginning a new medication you will meet with your practitioner and other members of the treatment team (social workers, pharmacists, nurses, psychologists, etc) on a frequent basis to discuss how you are feeling. At each medication visit, any symptoms or side effects that you might have will be discussed and your treatment team will want to talk with you about how you are doing day to day. You will be asked to share anything you have noticed about how you are feeling since starting the medication. In order to thoroughly understand how you are feeling, your practitioner or treatment team member may ask a lot of questions about your symptoms or side effects, such as how often they occur, when they occur, how long they last, how much they bother you or interfere with your activities. With this approach of sharing information, you and your treatment team will make decisions together regarding your medication treatment.

## **What if my symptoms or side effects don't improve?**

If you have been on a medication for at least 4 weeks, and you are still having problems with any symptom or side effect, there are several options, or steps, that you and your treatment team will consider, based on how you are feeling. You and your practitioner may discuss slowly taking less of the current medication and starting a new medication that could be more effective for your recovery process. Another possibility might be to change the amount of the medication you are currently taking, or you might add an additional medication to help with the management of the symptom or side effect you are experiencing. For some medicines, blood tests of how much medicine is in your system can be very useful in deciding if the dose should be changed. The aim is to

find the medication that has the least troublesome side effects, but is still effective for your symptoms. It is important to remember that there are options and that in time you and your team will reach the medication treatment that works best for you.

## **Are some people more or less sensitive than others to the medications that are used for treatment of schizophrenia?**

Some people are more or less sensitive than others to the medications that are used for treatment of schizophrenia. If you have low blood pressure, heart problems, kidney problems, or are a smoker, you may take a different dose of medication than an individual who does not smoke or have these health problems. If you are age 65 or older, you may need less medication than usual. Race, ethnic background, and gender may change the amount of medications you need, as well. You and your practitioner will discuss your medical history and current needs and you will have the tools at hand to make decisions that will help to determine your medication treatment so that it will be optimal for you.

## **What if I am pregnant or plan to get pregnant?**

The type of medications used to treat schizophrenia should be carefully reviewed if you are a woman who is, or plans to get, pregnant. You should talk with your practitioner and treatment team if you suspect you are pregnant, or want to get pregnant.

## **Where can I get more information about the medication/s prescribed to me?**

Ask your treatment team or practitioner for more information and a fact sheet about your medication. You can get detailed information from the inserts that come with a prescription or by asking your pharmacist. There are additional medication information resources listed at the end of the question/answer section.

## **Is it important to take my medications regularly?**

Yes, as prescribed by your practitioner. Taking your medications regularly is a part of the process of recovery. If you have difficulties with remembering your medications, or any other difficulty about taking the medications, talk with your practitioner and treatment team members. There are ways that they can help you to successfully manage your medication treatment.

## **When I feel better should I stop taking my medications?**

If you are thinking about stopping your medications talk to your practitioner and treatment team first. You and your practitioner will discuss your situation, and together you will decide whether a trial period off medications is an option that could be beneficial for you. The likelihood that your illness will come back if you stop taking medication depends on many factors, including your diagnosis.

## **What other services might be available to me in addition to my medication treatment?**

Your practitioner and other team members can assist you with getting services such as help with understanding and managing your illness, finding housing, finding a job or getting into school, and other services. They can also assist you with additional treatments that might be helpful to you such as, personal or group counseling, a support group, counseling for your family members or friends who support you so that they can better understand the illness, or help with alcohol and substance abuse.

## **Why should I support a practice that uses a step-by-step and/or guidelines approach to medications?**

Support for a practice like MedMAP benefits consumers being treated for severe mental illnesses and the teams and agencies involved in the treatment delivery in several ways. In an evidence-based practice consumers have access to the best possible treatment delivered in an effective manner. Consumers are encouraged to share in the decision-making about their medication treatment and management. Recovery is the goal, and inadequate treatment of an illness is an obstacle. MedMAP provides the practitioner, treatment team, and consumer the tools for choosing the best treatment options known, in an efficient fashion, thereby optimizing the recovery process.

# Resources on Mental Illness and Medications

## *Organizations*

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)

200 N. Glebe Rd. Suite 1015

Arlington, VA 22203-3754

1-800-950-6264

[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

National Mental Health Association (NMHA)

1021 Prince Street

Alexandria, VA 22314-2971

1-800-969-6692

[www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org)

National Alliance for Research on Schizophrenia and Depression (NARSAD)

1-800-829-8289

[www.narsad.org](http://www.narsad.org)

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)

730 N. Franklin Street, Suite 501

Chicago, Illinois 60610-7224 USA

(800) 826-3632

(312) 642-0049

(312) 642-7243 – fax

[www.dbsalliance.org](http://www.dbsalliance.org)

## *Books and Literature*

### **Mental Illness**

*Surviving Mental Illness: Stress, Coping and Adaptation*, A.B. Hatfield and H.P. Lefley. New York: Guilford Press, 1993

*Broken Brain: The Biological Revolution in Psychiatry*, N.C. Andreasen. New York: Harper & Row, 1984

*New Psychiatry: The Essential Guide to State-of-the-Art Therapy, Medication, and Emotional Health*, J.M. Gorman. St. Martins, 1996

### **Mood Disorders**

*Overcoming Depression (3rd Edition)*, Demitri Papolos. New York: Harper Perennial, 1997

*Brilliant Madness: Living with Manic-Depressive Illness*, Patty Duke. Bantam Books, 1993

### **Schizophrenia**

*Breakthroughs in Antipsychotic Medications: A Guide for Consumers, Families, and Clinicians*, Peter J. Weiden, Editor. WW Norton & Co., 1999

*Conquering Schizophrenia: A Father, His Son and a Medical Breakthrough*, P. Wyden. Knopf, 1998

Expert Consensus Treatment Guidelines for Schizophrenia: A Guide for Patients and Families, Peter J. Weiden, et al. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 1999, 60 (suppl 11)

*Schizophrenia: What you need to know*, National Mental Health Association, February 2000

*Understanding Schizophrenia: A Guide for People With Schizophrenia and Their Families*, NARSAD, 1996

## *Internet Resources*

The following websites contain information about mental illnesses, medications, and links to other resources.

SAMHSA's National Mental Health Information Center [www.samhsa.gov/cmhs](http://www.samhsa.gov/cmhs)

National Institute of Mental Health [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

Internet Mental Health [www.mentalhealth.com](http://www.mentalhealth.com)

About: The Human Internet [www.mentalhealth.about.com](http://www.mentalhealth.about.com)

**Information about schizophrenia only and medication management**

Texas Medication Algorithm Project/Texas Implementation of Medication Algorithms (TMAP/TIMA)

TMAP began in 1996 as collaborative research effort in the state of Texas to develop, implement and evaluate medication algorithm-driven treatment. The medication management in TMAP consists of evidence-based, consensually agreed upon medication treatment algorithms, clinical and technical support to implement, patient and family education programs, and documentation of patient care and outcomes.

TIMA is the ongoing statewide implementation phase of TMAP occurring in the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation facilities.

[www.mhmr.state.tx.us/centraloffice/medicaldirector/TIMA.html](http://www.mhmr.state.tx.us/centraloffice/medicaldirector/TIMA.html)

[www.mhmr.state.tx.us/centraloffice/medicaldirector/TMAP.html](http://www.mhmr.state.tx.us/centraloffice/medicaldirector/TMAP.html)

**Other Evidence-based Practices in this Series:**

Illness Management & Recovery

Integrated Co-Occurring Disorders Treatment

Assertive Community Treatment

Family Psychoeducation

Supported Employment

[www.mentalhealthpractices.org](http://www.mentalhealthpractices.org)