

# Medication Management Approaches in Psychiatry

Implementation Resource Kit



DRAFT VERSION  
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## Information for Families and Other Supporters

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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 a step-by-step and/or guidelines approach to prescribing medications make a difference in my family member or friend's recovery process?**

Research has shown that many consumers are either under or over medicated and not at an optimal level of medication that would help them in the recovery process. MedMAP can really help. Because your family member or friend and his/her practitioner will be monitoring the medication's effectiveness as well as its symptoms and side effects, medications that are not working well will not be continued. If your family member or friend has only partially responded to the medicine, he/she and the practitioner will look at the next steps and together they will decide what might be more effective. If your friend or family member agrees, you could share in the decisions that are made about medication management.

## **What can I expect with this approach to Medication Management?**

With the decision that your family member or friend and the practitioner make, you can expect your family member or friend to try an antipsychotic medication for at least 4 weeks to determine its effectiveness. When a new medication is being started, your friend or family member will meet with the practitioner on a frequent basis to discuss how he/she is feeling. Severity of the symptoms and side effects that might be occurring plus overall functioning will be evaluated at each visit. Your family member or friend will be asked to share information about how he/she is feeling since starting the medication with the practitioner and other members of the treatment team (social workers, pharmacists, nurses, psychologists, etc). In order to thoroughly understand how your family member or friend is feeling, the practitioner or treatment team member may ask a lot of questions about his/her symptoms or side effects, such as how often they occur, when they occur, how long they last, how bothersome they are or how much they interfere with life activities. As a family member or supporter, you can contribute by sharing your observations with the practitioner and treatment team, if your family member or friend wishes you to do so.

## **What if my family member or friend's symptoms or side effects don't improve?**

When an adequate medication trial has been given and your family member or friend is still having problems with any symptom or side effect, there are several options, or next steps, that your family member or friend and the treatment team will consider. Your family member or friend and his/her

practitioner may discuss tapering the current medication down and starting a new medication that could be more effective in the recovery process. Another possibility might be to change the amount of the medication currently being taken, or to add an additional medication to help with the management of the symptom or side effect being experienced. For some medicines, blood tests of how much medicine is in the 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 on the symptoms. It is important to remember that there are options and that, in time, and with your support and the help of the treatment team, your family member or friend will discover which medication works best for him or her.

## **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 your family member or friend has low blood pressure, heart problems, kidney problems, or is a smoker, the amount of the medication he/she will take may be different. If your family member or friend is age 65 or older, less medication than usual may be needed. Race, ethnic background and gender may change the amount of medication needed as well. Your family member or friend and the practitioner will discuss his/her medical history and current needs and, together, they will have the tools at hand to make decisions that will help to shape the medication treatment so that it will be optimal for your friend or family member.

## **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)