

Coping with Chronic Illness

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The Challenges

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Distress
- Impact on the Family
- Communication with the Medical Team

What is Depression?

- Medical illness
- Common
- Disabling
- Persistent
- Highly treatable

Am I Depressed...?

- Loss of interest or pleasure
- Sad, "down", or anxious mood
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Appetite changes, weight changes
- Difficulty concentrating
- Lack of energy

... Am I Depressed?

- Hopelessness
- Irritability, restlessness
- Feelings of guilt
- Thoughts of death or suicide

*** 5 or more symptoms
 *** Symptoms for more than 2 weeks
 *** Symptoms are disabling

Maybe It's Just Sadness?

Sadness is:

- More common
- Often related to events
- More likely to be temporary

Who Is At Risk?

- Over 18 million Americans per year
- More common with medical illness
- Previous problems with depression
- Those with unresolved pain
- Medication side effects
- Women - 2 times as likely as men

Types of Depression...

- Major Depression
 - previously mentioned symptoms
 - disabling problem
 - problem for more than 2 weeks
 - often occurs with medical illness
 - rate about 25%

...Types of Depression

- Adjustment Disorder with Depressed Mood
 - reaction to an event or experience
 - within 6 months of event
 - women and men equally affected
 - rates range from 5 to 20%

Depression is treatable!

Treatment of Depression

- Medical evaluation
- Anti-depressant medications
- Self-help interventions
- Psychotherapy - particularly cognitive-behavioral therapy
- Combination approaches

...Treatment of Depression

- Self-help Interventions
 - Exercise
 - Social contact
 - Pleasurable activities
 - Relaxation
 - Support groups
 - Spiritual support

...Treatment of Depression

- Psychotherapy:
 - **Interpersonal Therapy**
 - **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy**
 - Focus on:
 - here and now
 - activities/behaviors
 - patterns of thinking

...Treatment of Depression

- When will I feel better?
 - Medication is a little faster, but still requires weeks
 - Therapy is slower, but helps to avoid relapse
 - Important to continue treatment after initial success in order to prevent relapse

What is Anxiety?

- How to distinguish between normal and abnormal anxiety
- Anxiety may be related to:
 - the situation
 - the disease
 - the treatment
 - an exacerbation of pre-existing anxiety disorder
- Frequency in those with cancer 15-28%

Risk for Anxiety: Who?

- Previous problems with anxiety
- Breathing difficulties
- Particular types of treatment

Risk for Anxiety: When?

- Transition points in treatment
- Progression of cancer
- End of treatment

Types of Anxiety

- Phobias, including claustrophobia
- Panic Disorder
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder



Treatment of Anxiety

- Medication
 - As needed
 - Routine use
- Self-help interventions
- Counseling, supportive therapy




...Treatment of Anxiety

- Self-help Interventions
 - Exercise
 - Relaxation
 - Social contact
 - Pleasurable activities
 - Support groups
 - Spiritual support




The Course of Distress

- Most people with chronic illness get better on their own or with "regular care"
- Many of those who get psychosocial care are done in 1-2 sessions
- Bottom Line: There is more concern when someone gets "stuck".



What Can You Do To Help Yourself...?

- Try what's helped before
- Use support systems
- Maintain your routine as much as possible
- Take care of yourself
- Learn a method of relaxation
- Use distraction



...What Can You Do To Help Yourself?

- Get information from reliable sources
- Ask for help
- Look for positive outcomes
- Set limits
- Use humor
- Keep a journal
- Manage worries



What About Positive Attitude?

- Studies in 2002 & 2004 showed no impact on survival
- Actual benefits:
 - Better compliance with treatment recommendations
 - Better mood
 - Less perceived pain

Impact of Illness on the Family...

- More treatment and more complicated treatment done as outpatient
- Caregiving frequently falls to a small number of people
 - often women
 - ill equipped to provide care

...Impact on Illness on the Family

- 90% of Americans believe caregiving is a family responsibility
- Things that affect one member of family, affect others in family
- Families are made of real people
- Both roles are hard

Financial pressures

- 20% of family members quit work to provide care
- Financial devastation
 - 31% lost family savings
 - 40% of families became impoverished
 - Health costs = most frequent reason for declaring bankruptcy

Communication with Family


- Keep lines of communication open
- Use resources, such as answering machine, e-mail, Caringbridge.com
- Have multiple sources of support
- Decide in advance how much you want to share

Manage Your Medical Care

- Pay attention to your symptoms
- Choose a provider and a care plan that "fits" you
- Consider medical care a collaboration
- Expect results from treatment

Communication with Your Medical Team...

- Write down your questions in advance
- Be informed
- Listen
- Keep to the point
- Take notes during the appointment



...Communication with Your Medical Team...

- Bring someone with you to appointments
- Ask what symptoms your team wants to know about urgently
- Be honest, don't minimize problems
 - Monitor symptoms you need to report
 - Don't say "fine" if it's not true



Resilience



Thank you!

Questions?