**BEHAVIORAL MEDICINE**

Ma. Lourdes Rosanna E. de Guzman, MD, MS Epi, FPPA

Many health care organizations have integrated the essential findings of [health psychology](http://brainblogger.com/2006/03/12/bps-the-emergence-of-health-psychology/) in the form of Behavioral Medicine – a multidisciplinary field concerned with behavioral and social aspects of medical conditions. The aim is to erase the lines between mental health and physical health and promote the notion that they are indivisible and inherently linked aspects of well-being, namely, on the basic premise that behaviors influence physical health.

Clinical and health professionals are now extensively collaborating in the medical setting and have found a genuine locus in clinical care. Psychologists and physicians, both psychiatrists and general medical providers, collaboratively perform extensive case-sharing, cross-referrals, patient education, and public policy for mental health (Bush, 2002). The MD-psychiatrist normally prescribes medication, evaluates responses, and performs follow-up clinical management, as well as, provides psychosocial interventions and often monitors and reports medical compliance and side effect profiles. Furthermore, MD-psychiatrists are discussing psychoactive agents to their patients as an ethical discretion before securing informed consent for treatment (Littrell & Ashford, 1995). Psychiatrists prepare patients for anxiety triggering procedures (i.e. with mental imagery), offer stress coping techniques, and aid in the rehabilitation of chronic pain patients.

**Behavioral Medicine**

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| The interrelated nature of the mind and the body is a well-accepted phenomenon. They are not mutually exclusive; the mind and the body each influence the other in some capacity. For instance, stress can exacerbate or possibly cause physical illness, preventing or delaying recovery. On the other hand, physical illnesses can lead to psychological distress, resulting in symptoms such as depression, anxiety, relational problems, and substance abuse. Because of this strong interconnection, psychological and behavioral services can complement medical treatment. The expertise of a behavioral health psychiatrist can offer unique contributions to patient management, providing insight into psychological aspects of the medical illness, understanding and explaining possible roadblocks in treatment, and aiding in formulating effective treatment plans.  The Module on Behavioral Medicine has as its main objective is to promote health through psychological awareness and effective behavioral change. This interdisciplinary field, which promotes the development and integration of sociocultural, psychosocial, behavioral, and medical aspects as they relate to overall health and illness, uses a multidisciplinary and integrated approach to understanding and identifying behaviors and experiences that promote health, give rise to illness, and influence the effectiveness of treatment and recovery. |  |

Because Behavioral Medicine focuses on understanding how peoples’ behaviors and feelings affect their overall health and how different medical conditions affect their behaviors and feelings, treatment often involves changing behaviors and habits to help restore balance to the client’s life. These changes may include, but are not limited to

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| * Assessing, understanding, and modifying resistant behavioral patterns; * Challenging and changing negative thought patterns; * Enhancing healthy stress management and coping skills; * Learning and utilizing relaxation and mindfulness techniques; * Identifying and capitalizing on client strengths; * Understanding and implementing effective problems solving skills; * Assertiveness training |  |

We understand that change can be very difficult. This dilemma in change is the reason why we need to develop a unique approach to the medical and behavioral assessment process. In addition to participating in a comprehensive assessment that will help better understand the psychological factors impacting the patient’s medical concerns, there is also the opportunity for the patient to engage in a series of brief, structured interventions. These interventions are tailored specifically to the patient and the concerns expressed by the referring party. These interventions will capitalize on the patients’ strengths, with the goal of enhancing their medical treatment and providing patients with the motivation and courage to move toward positive change, improving their quality of life and restoring hope for their future.

**Behavioral Science Learning Modules (**[www.who.int/mental](http://www.who.int/mental)**\_health)**

* **Communicating bad news**
* **Communicating with patients and their families**
* **Encouraging people to stop smoking**
* **Preparing Patients for Invasive Medical and Surgical Procedures**
* **Introducing parents to their abnormal baby**
* **Promoting Non-pharmacologic Interventions to Treat Elevated Blood Pressure**
* **Psychological Interventions for patients with Chronic Back Pain**
* **Self-Management of Recurrent Headache**
* **Improving Adherence Behavior with treatment regimens**
* **Insomnia: Cognitive and behavioral Interventions**

**References:**

* **Behavioral Science Learning Modules (**[**www.who.int/mental**](http://www.who.int/mental)**\_health)**
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