

# Clinical Guidelines for “Just the Facts-Medication for Psychosis”

## OVERVIEW:

This module provides the basic facts about medication for psychosis. You will inquire about the participants' understanding and attitudes toward medication and answer common questions that people often have about medications. As a result, participants will become informed about treatment options for psychosis and help their loved one develop an effective plan to manage medications.

### Goals

1. Provide basic information on which medications are used to treat psychosis, their clinical benefits and side-effects.
2. Help the family support the client in becoming an informed client about his/her medications.
3. Help the participants identify strategies to help her take the medications as prescribed.

### Handout Needed

Educational handout - Just the Facts--Medications for Psychosis

## TEACHING STRATEGIES:

- Before teaching the participants about the specific topic, assess their knowledge by asking them what he/she already knows about medications, benefits and side-effects, etc.
- Do not assume that all participants believe medication is a desirable treatment.
- Normalize ambivalence about taking medications. It is important to note that many individuals don't want to be on medications (for any disease or disorder) and that it is easy to forget to take them.
- Ask the relative if he/she ever has any reluctance or difficulty in following any medication prescriptions he/she may have had (e.g., antibiotics, hypertension medications)—

typically they have had this experience, and this may create empathy with the member who has psychosis if he/she is having difficulty taking medication as prescribed.

- When weighing the pros and cons of taking medications, ask the participants to generate as many as they can (i.e., use “brainstorming”). Also, look for either pros or cons that are particularly strong or compelling. For example, the absolute number of pros of taking medications may outweigh the cons, but certain cons may be very important to the participants (e.g., taking medications means that the client is ill). Help the participants consider how the pros and cons relate to the client’s goals. For example, if a client identifies having better concentration as one of the pros of taking medication, this could be connected to his or her goal of wanting to maintain employment.
- Use behavioral rehearsal, if necessary, to help the relatives prepare for discussion of medications with the client (if not present) and/or the doctor.
- Ask the participants what strategies they use to remember to take medications. Use the table at the end of this handout to identify new strategies.

## **TIPS FOR COMMON PROBLEMS:**

- Participant says that medications have no benefits, and may insist that they only have disadvantages. Do not challenge the participant on this point. Rather, concede that there are disadvantages and help the participant identify additional strategies that will support recovery.
- Participant reports little interest in learning about medications. Do not force the issue. You can either review the material (but not in great depth) or wait until later in treatment when there is more motivation to learn about them.
- Client has poor medication adherence.
  - Find out if non-adherence is due to motivation or memory difficulties, if you can, and address with targeted interventions.
  - If the former, focus on the pros and cons of taking medications, as well as how medication use relates to his/her broader goals.
  - If the latter, review strategies for remembering to take medications as prescribed such as taking morning medication right after brushing teeth.

## **THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL OF THE SESSION:**

Help the participants figure out how to support the client’s regular medication taking during early recovery

## **EVALUATING GAINS:**

- After completing the handout for this topic area it may be helpful to assess how much knowledge the participants have retained about medications. You can assess a participant's knowledge using the following questions:
  1. What medications are used to treat psychosis?
  2. What are some common benefits of these medications? How about side-effects?
  3. What are some strategies to try if weight gain is an issue?
  4. If you met someone who just had an initial psychotic episode, how would you advise them to talk to their doctor? What sort of questions would you suggest that they ask their doctor?
  5. What sorts of strategies are used to help people remember to take medications?