



Counselling Workroom

Debunking Myths About

Psychiatric Medication

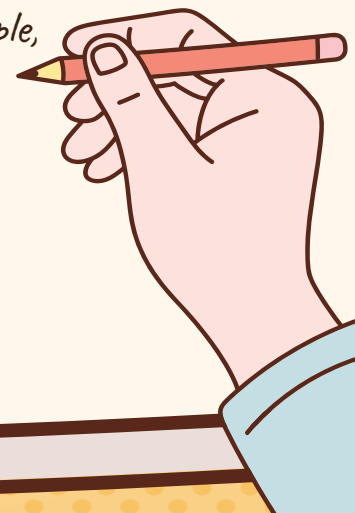
Medication treatments help to control mental health conditions. According to the patient's clinical condition, psychiatrist will prescribe medications to manage and stabilize the mental condition of the patient. However, many patients do not know much about medicines. They may have wrong perception towards medical treatment, which lead to worries and reluctance in taking medications.

Thus, we have invited **Dr. Ng Kong Man, psychiatrist**, to debunk the myths about taking psychiatric medication.



Why do patients with mood disorders or mental illness need medication?

Although psychotherapy can improve some conditions in mood disorders, medication treatment promotes the recovery of affected areas in the brain by restoring the neurotransmitter chemicals. For example, antidepressants enhance the transmission of serotonin among brain cells; antipsychotic medication regulates a chemical called "dopamine" for managing delusions or hallucinations.



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My friend and I suffer from same mood disorder, why do we take different medications?



Even if patients suffer from same mood disorder, they could present with very different symptoms and conditions. For example, among two patients with anxiety disorder, if one patient does not have sleep problems, then hypnotic is not required for him/her. In addition, the responses to the medicines of each person could be different. Depending on the patient's situation, such as drug tolerance and the side effects, psychiatrist would prescribe the optimal medications for each patient.

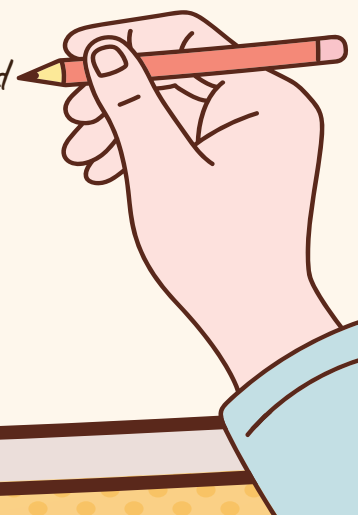
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I am worried about the side effects of psychiatric medications!

Each medicine has possible side effects, no matter it is Chinese or Western medicine. Often times, patients are reluctant to take medications because of these side effects. Some of them might stop taking medicines by their own.

We should understand for psychiatric medicine, the side effects may appear relatively quickly, whereas the medicine may need more time to take effect. Thus, we need to be patient for a short while, and the side effects would gradually subside.

Patients are recommended to discuss with their doctors about their conditions and feelings, so their doctors could adjust the type and amount of medications accordingly.



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Can psychiatric medications be taken with other medicines at the same time?



In general, psychiatric medications and other medicines (such as medicine for cold or Chinese medicine) should be taken at least 4 hours apart to allow sufficient digestion. However, everyone's situation is different, you are recommended to seek advice from your doctor.

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Can I drink alcohol while taking medicines?

Drinking alcohol may affect your mental conditions, such as mood swings and other mental status. It may also worsen the side effects of medications. Therefore, it is not recommended to drink alcohol while taking medicines. If you cannot avoid it, take them at least 4 hours apart, and it is also better to drink less.

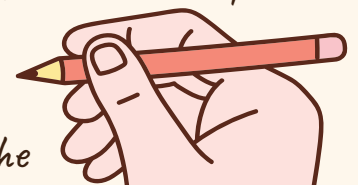


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Can I stop seeking counselling service if I am already taking psychiatric medications?



Psychiatric medications mainly treat the patient's symptoms. Psychotherapy in counselling service (meeting with social workers, counsellors or psychologists) facilitates the patient to understand and cope with emotion, change thinking patterns, enhance problem-solving skills, and to reduce the chance of relapse.



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When can a person stop medications?



Even if the condition improves and the patient is able to cope with daily life, it is still recommended to continue medication treatment for a period of time (several months) to observe the patient's condition and consolidate the recovery. Psychiatrists would consider different factors, such as the patient's current stress level, past onset history, family background, etc., to make decision on the treatment plan arrangement, include possibility of reducing the medications, or termination.

Patients should not stop or reduce medication on their own, which may increase the chance of relapse.

Just like we wear sunscreen to protect our skin when having outdoor activities, extended medication treatment works a preventive measure to consolidate the recovery and reduce the risk of relapse.

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What should patients pay attention to after stopping the medication?



Symptoms may reappear in one to two months after stopping medication. Patient should pay attention to see if their symptoms reappear or they have abnormal mood. If the patient feels own condition has been getting worse, please do not wait and should make an appointment with the psychiatrist as soon as possible.



In addition, patients are advised to establish healthy living habits, such as regular daily routine and exercise to maintain mental well-being.



Mood disorders and mental illness are different from low mood.
If you would like to know more or need any support,
do come and meet our counsellor for professional assistance.