Medications for Mood and other Mental Health Issues: Understanding Medications, and How they are used to Treat Various Mental Health Conditions

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Learning Objectives

1. Understand the neurobiological basics about how psychiatric medications work
2. Explain the rationale for which medications are chosen for symptoms, mood and specific patient presentations
3. Discuss the various actions, uses, effects and side effects of antidepressants, antianxiety and mood stabilizing medications
4. Identify barriers that may impede your clients experience, and compliance with their medications
5. Understand the various options for patients with treatment resistant disorders and chronic disorders
6. Discuss how antipsychotic medications work including their effects, side effects, and off label uses.
7. Learn at least 3 useful strategies for improving collaboration with the practitioners who prescribe for your patients
8. Understand the many options for treatment of ADHD, as well as other conditions that may mimic ADHD
9. Develop competency in understanding, and discussing options for natural options and prescribed medication management of sleep disorders
10. Describe the pitfalls and options regarding medications in individuals with eating disorders
11. Discuss how to effectively incorporate medication assisted treatments into an overall plan of care for patients with substance use disorders
12. Describe the interaction between women's and men's hormone levels and their mental health
13. Understand what complementary alternative medicine (CAM) treatments include, and discuss how they might be helpful for various mental health problems.
14. Outline several modifications in medication consideration based on age, gender and pregnancy potential.

Program Outline

Neurochemistry
- How do medications work?
- Why do I need to know this?
- It sounds complicated! An explanation that is easier to understand
- What are neurotransmitters and how do I get them?
- In general, what do neurotransmitters do, and why is this important?
- If someone has depleted neurotransmitters, how did that happen and how do they fix it?
- Taking neurotransmitters one at a time so they make sense later when discussing disorders
  - Serotonin
  - Norepinephrine
  - Dopamine
  - Epinephrine
  - GABA
  - Glutamate
  - Acetylcholine

Medications that are used to treat depression
- Common side effects and cautions
- Why do these medications take so long to start working?
- What is "flipping" and what do I do if that happens?
- Older medication categories that are still used
  - Tricyclics
  - MAOI's
- Newer antidepressants
  - SSRI's
  - SNRI's
  - Other options: Supplements that are medication

Medications used to treat Anxiety (anxiolytics)
- Cautions about anxiolytics
- Common problems with anxiolytics
- Categories of medications used, and explanations of why one may make more sense than another
  - Benzodiazepines
  - SSRI's (aren't those antidepressants? Why are they in this category?)
  - Blood pressure medication (Now I am really confused! How would these work?)
  - Other choices that may help, and CAM treatments to consider

Psychosis: Choices based on a patient's needs, biology and symptoms
- A brain discussion: Areas of the brain that are affected when a person has psychosis
- Brain discussion continued: Specific targets in the brain that bring relief from psychosis
- First generation and second generation antipsychotics: What is the difference?
  - First generation antipsychotics
    - Side effects
    - Long term effects
    - Monitoring for problems
  - Second generation antipsychotics (SGA)
    - Side effects
    - Long term effects
    - Monitoring for problems
  - The newest SGA's: why are they different, and is that better?

Bipolar Disorder
- The discovery of a medication by accident
- Is lithium still the best medication for bipolar?
- Treatment choices based on the type of bipolar disorder a person's diagnosis
- Options for treatment: Pro's and Con's:
  - Lithium – when do we add it?
  - Mood stabilizers
  - SGA's (aren't those for psychosis?)
  - Complimentary alternative treatments that may help
  - Monitoring for effect, side effects and adverse effects

ADHD and ADD
- How to determine if it is really ADHD or just symptoms that look like ADHD
- Understanding the basics of brain function errors that result in ADHD symptoms.

- Choosing a medication that makes sense
  - Non-stimulants are not all alike
  - Stimulants are not all alike
- How to monitor this person for problems related to their medication
- How do we know the medicine is working?

Eating problems
- Eating disorders are not all the same
- Anorexia Nervosa
- Bulimia Nervosa
- Binge Eating Disorder

Dementia and other Cognitive problems
- What causes dementia? Risk factors and protective factors
- Assessing decline
- Medication options

Substance Abuse and Addiction Treatment Options
- What is addiction?
- How to determine when/if a person may benefit from a medication
- Considering CAM treatments for some cases
- Treatment depends on the substance
  - Nicotine treatments
  - Alcohol relapse prevention and symptom treatments
  - Cannabis: is there anything that might help?
  - Opiates: past, present, and the return of the past
  - Stimulants, methamphetamine and hallucinogens

Insomnia
- What Causes sleep problems?
- Neurotransmitters that are off balance with sleep problems
- Sleep problems are not the same
  1. Medical Sleep disorders: Sleep apnea, circadian rhythm disorders
  2. Medications used to normalize the sleep cycle
  3. Psychiatric Disorders that interrupt sleep
  4. Chronic Pain related sleep problems
  5. Substance Use Disorders that create or aggravate sleep problems
  6. Successful behavioral training promoting insomnia
  7. CAM treatments that may help

Gender considerations
- Hormones
- Pregnancy
- Menopause

A short discussion of CAM treatments including supplements, vitamins and herbal treatments

Wrapping things up: Working with prescribers, communicating with patients about problems and remembering modifications for children and elderly.