

DOCTOR-PATIENT PARTNERSHIPS CRUCIAL WITH MOOD DISORDERS

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The relationship between doctor and patient is both unique and invaluable. Since doctors receive several years of specialized training, patients often view their physicians as all-knowing and infallible. While the balance of expertise certainly weighs in favor of the doctor, it would be beneficial to re-evaluate the doctor-patient relationship in a new light – as a partnership.

In today's complex world of dwindling insurance benefits and managed care carveouts, patients can no longer afford to follow a doctor's instructions without question. Doctors and patients must form alliances and work towards the goal for all of us - the mental health of people with mood disorders.

The value of this partnership between doctors and their patients is invaluable. In fact, the way a doctor and patient work together within the parameters of a therapeutic relationship will determine the speed and permanency with which people with depressive illnesses establish an acceptable quality of life.

Forming such a partnership is both therapeutic and simple to initiate. However, to achieve and maintain these relationships, doctors must give patients, as well as their families and friends, an active role in managing their disorders. When patients are given this opportunity, they must seize it. By taking a proactive role in their

therapy, patients will develop a sense of responsibility for their treatment program and respect for the doctor who invites them to take part in their own care.

While partnerships can be initiated easily, barriers to their long-term growth exist. Like all relationships, sometimes the bond between doctor and patient is not strong enough to endure time and circumstances. In fact, many patients work with more than one mental health professional before developing a healthy partnership. Although obstacles may exist, it is critical that all doctors and patients work to form alliances that help shed light on the mystery surrounding mood disorders.

Partnerships are also important because each of us has something important to contribute to the well-being of others. As doctors and therapists, we can be advocates for a complete continuity of care when it comes to medication, psychotherapy, support groups, and on-going physician and patient education. As patients, we can articulate the value and importance of the recent triumphs of psychiatric research and clinical methods. Throughout combined efforts we can develop mutually beneficial partnerships that will enhance the quality of life for the millions who live with depression and manic depression.

"There is hope and there is help."



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*Helping People
Help Themselves*

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