



Psychiatric Care:
Working in
the Psych Ward

Lesson 6

Vocabulary List

Reference Notes

borderline personality disorder – *n.* a mental illness that affects a person's ability to have personal relationships, making him impulsive and unpredictable in his behavior.

delusion – *n.* a persistent idea, belief or thought that is not based in reality.

excessive – *adj.* greater than what is normal or necessary; too much.

hallucinate – *v.* to see, hear or feel something that is not really there.

hyper – *adj.* abnormally high.

hypo – *adj.* abnormally low.

imperative – *adj.* vital; important; mandatory.

mania – *n.* enthusiasm.

manic depression – *n.* a mental illness characterized by wide changes in mood, from increased excitement, elation and energy in the manic phase to profound sadness, loneliness and fatigue in the depressed state.

pursue – *v.* to chase or follow after with the intent to catch or attain.

restrain – *v.* to hold someone back from action.

schizophrenia – *n.* a mental illness characterized by distortion of reality, difficulty with communication and thought, withdrawal from social interaction, hallucinations, delusions and bizarre behavior.

streak – *n.* slight tendency; trait.

voluntarily – *adv.* by one's own choice; of one's free will.

ward – *n.* an area of a hospital for patients needing a similar kind of care.

Reading

Psychiatric Care: Working in the Psych Ward

Riverview Hospital is home to a very old, well respected and efficient psychiatric **ward**. The ward treats patients with **schizophrenia**, **manic depression**, **borderline personality disorder** and various other forms of mental illness.

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Despite general assumptions that “psych” wards are scary places, Registered Nurse Melissa Bonnier says, “It can be a very positive experience. We try to preserve the patient’s quality of life.” The ward allows outings to the mall, day passes on holidays, and it even holds Friday night dances and bowling activities. All of these luxuries, however, depend on a patient’s behavior.

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Bonnier explains a bit about the nature of schizophrenia. She says schizophrenic patients experience mood cycles. They will go from a state of **hyper mania**, where they are “high” and **excessively** excited, to the other extreme of **hypo mania**, where they have low energy and tend to be depressed. In a hyper manic state, a schizophrenic will **hallucinate** about imaginary people or events in his/her life. Sometimes he will take on a new identity, ask questions about someone who has been dead for years, or get violent. **Streaks** of violence in some schizophrenics have even resulted in unintentional murders. Obviously, this illness cannot be taken lightly.

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Schizophrenics usually bounce in and out of hospitals frequently because of these extreme moods. They tend to have trouble managing their own medications. Some of these medications include mood stabilizers like lithium, clonazepam and clozapime and anti-psychotic drugs like Benztropine, or anti-Parkinson’s pills. It is **imperative** that the patients take these drugs regularly to avoid high-risk situations.

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Bonnier describes an especially hard day in the ward to give a sense of her job there. A schizophrenic adult woman was having **delusions** that her family was

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about to arrive for a visit. The family was not actually coming. She started running down the hallway screaming, “You're not going to get me! My family is coming for me!” The nurses **pursued** her to stop her from running, but it was too late. She slipped and fell, breaking her wrist in two places. This led to
35 more screaming, more delusions and the nurses **restraining** her so that she would not hurt herself or anyone else. They had to wait until she calmed down before they could let go of her.

40 Bonnier says that despite situations like that one, where all of the nurses feel drained and frustrated, she gets many rewards from working with psychiatric patients. “We took the patients out for Chinese food on Christmas Eve,” she says. “They loved it, and we were excited to see them interacting socially and enjoying themselves so much.”

45 Fifteen per cent of the patients on the Riverview Psychiatric Unit are there **voluntarily**. This is a good sign, because if a patient checks himself in, it indicates that he wants to get better. There is no limit to a patient's stay. Some live there for the rest of their lives. “We work as a team with doctors and
50 social workers to consider all factors and decide what is best for the individual,” says Bonnier. “We try to relate to the patients. We all have moments of confusion and frustration in life. These people are not that different from us. If we keep that in mind, everybody wins.”



Vocabulary Exercise

Fill-in-the-Blank – complete each sentence with the correct word suggested in the list. You may have to change the word form to fit the sentence.

**borderline delusion hallucinate hyper hypo voluntarily stabilizer
cycle imperative interact manic mood restrain schizophrenic ward**

1. It is _____ that patients with schizophrenia continue to take their medication.
2. The young man was troubled by a _____ that the CIA was after him.
3. It was difficult to _____ the woman when she lost control and attempted to hurt herself.
4. The nurse tried to reassure the patient that he was _____ the voices he heard and that they were not real.
5. Anti-psychotic medications help _____ patients keep in touch with reality.
6. Patients with _____ personality disorder have difficulty _____ socially with other people.
7. People with mental illnesses such as manic depression and schizophrenia experience _____, from _____ mania to _____ mania.
8. The man _____ participated in the group meeting facilitated by the psychiatrist.
9. The nurse has had a positive experience working on the psychiatric _____.
10. Lithium is an important medication that acts as a mood _____ when taken regularly by patients suffering from schizophrenia and _____ depression.

Comprehension Exercise

Multiple Choice – Answer the questions or paraphrase each sentence/underlined phrase with the best choice.

1. Schizophrenics usually bounce in and out of hospitals frequently because of these extreme moods.
 - a. moved from ward to ward in the hospital
 - b. been admitted to and discharged from the hospital
 - c. spent the last two months in the hospital

2. Streaks of violence in some schizophrenics have even resulted in unintentional murders.
 - a. Dangerous thoughts
 - b. Addiction to violence
 - c. Aggressive behaviors

3. Schizophrenic patients experience mood cycles. They
 - a. are always sad, with low energy
 - b. are seldom emotional
 - c. swing from hypo mania to hyper mania

4. Sometimes a patient with schizophrenia will take on a new identity. This means he
 - a. acts like he is someone else
 - b. lies about who he is
 - c. doesn't talk to any one he knows

5. In the story, the patient slipped and fell, breaking her wrist in two places. This means
 - a. She fell twice, each in a different place.
 - b. She broke her arm in half.
 - c. She had two injuries on one arm.

6. They had to wait until she calmed down before they could let go of her.
 - a. let her go home
 - b. release her
 - c. discharge her

Clinically Speaking



Practice the conversations with a classmate. Pay attention to the words in bold face. Check a dictionary for new words or idioms and add them to your reference notes.

1. Patient: “I would like to request **a day pass** for the Easter holiday.”
Nurse: “Let me look at your chart first and see if the doctor has **given permission for one**.”
2. Nurse: “Are you **experiencing any side effects** from the new anti-psychotic medicine that the doctor **prescribed for** you?”
Patient: “Yes. I have been feeling tired and **sick to my stomach** since I started the new medicine.”
3. Sarah’s Mother: “How has Sarah been doing over the last few days? Has she gotten out of bed to eat her meals at all?”
Nurse: “Sarah’s mood has improved very much. She is **getting out of bed** for meals and has been **interacting socially with** her roommate.”
4. New Patient: “What kinds of things can I do **during my stay** in the hospital? It will be so boring!”
Nurse: “We try to have fun around here. You can play cards with the other patients, and when you get well enough, you can **join us for** weekly outings to the mall.”
5. Charlie’s Father: “I don’t understand why my son **has such a hard time** interacting socially and **having relationships** with people.”
Nurse: “I know it’s difficult to understand, but that is **the nature of** borderline personality disorder.”
6. Admitting Nurse: “It is **a good sign** to see you here today. It shows me that you are ready to do what you need to in order to get better.”
Patient: “Yes, because I am **having a really hard time** managing my own medications, I need some help.”

Main Ideas

Group with two or three classmates. Discuss the question designated for your group and then send one person to present your team's conclusions to the class. Take notes during the presentations, and form your own answers.

Discussion:

Group 1, 3, 5, 7... :

- Bonnier said, "Working in the psychiatric unit can be a very positive experience." Can you explain?

Group 2, 4, 6, 8... :

- In the last paragraph, Bonnier said, "These people are not that different from us." Why did she say that? Please explain.

Summary:

- Your summary of why "Working in the psychiatric unit can be a very positive experience":

- Your summary of why "These people are not that different from us":