

PFCA

Wellness Update

PRINCETON FAMILY CARE ASSOCIATES, LLC

FALL 2021



Welcome to our Fall issue. We hope you find this communication helpful as we share topics that are timely and relevant to psychiatric care in general and more specifically to our Princeton Family Care Associates patients.

Message from Dr. Fernandez

*Tailoring treatment to our patient's clinical needs and their desired goals:
"Being a part of the team"*

We well know that we prefer not to be told what to do, particularly if it is a suggestion we are not comfortable with. In this practice, we take this into account while developing your treatment plan.

At PFCA, it is our mission to not only determine the best treatment plans for our patients, but also to take into account what the patient is hoping to get out of treatment; what their specific goals for care are. It is our goal to keep our clinical interventions person-centered.

This process starts at the initial evaluation where I will ask the patient what they wish to accomplish for themselves; what their goals for our meeting are and what they hope to ultimately achieve from psychiatric treatment. With these in mind, selections and directions of treatment are then made.

Though not always an easy task. (I would never recommend anything that was not clinically indicated or accommodate a patient's unrealistic expectation.) Treatment has a range of options and often one can be selected which that individual may feel more comfortable with.

"You can lead a horse to water but you cannot make them drink." Successful care requires the patient to be a cooperative, active and willing member of the treatment team.

That team can get them better... Not only better... but well.

I hope that you see how this may be of benefit in your care and encourage you to be an active part of your treatment team.

Sincerely,

Dr. Fernandez

The "Trouble" with Generics

Have you wondered if there is a difference between a brand-name medication versus a generic equivalent? Is this something you should be concerned about?

Recent investigative journalism has revealed that many generic medications may be less effective or may cause more side effects than the branded formulary. Many of the generics are manufactured overseas, mostly in India or China where, unfortunately, the FDA has minimal regulatory control over these overseas drug manufacturers. Katherine Eban, author of "Bottle of Lies", uncovered alarming conditions in these manufacturing plants including fraudulent data and substandard production plants. Unlike US plants, overseas manufacturers are informed when a plant inspection will take place months in advance and often can use this opportunity to launder their true conditions.

So should this concern you? Generics are, after all, so much more affordable than the branded products. What can you do to avoid problematic generics?

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The Future of Telemedicine at PFCA

 In March 2020, Princeton Family Care Associates began connecting with our patients via telemedicine. Multiple surveys show that treatment delivered via telemedicine has been a highly successful option for treatment, especially in Psychiatry. The widespread use of “telemental health” shows how well it is received by both health care professionals, and patients. However, telemedicine may not be the best solution for every patient, depending upon the individual needs. A recent survey published by Psychiatric Services suggested that virtual care could be beneficial for patients with anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder, while less beneficial for patients with psychotic or substance use disorders.

The challenge for psychiatric telemedicine is that it limits the clinician’s ability to read nonverbal cues (such as fidgeting) and ultimately assess the patient’s complex state of mind. Since the sessions only televise the head and torso, side effects to medications are more difficult to assess. There is also a risk of delivering less personal care in a virtual appointment. As well as, interference with poor technology and connectivity issues. The ideal connection is using a PC with a hard-wired ethernet cable connection to a router, which is what we use in our office. If patients are using a mobile device, we encourage them to ensure they have a strong WIFI connection, which means they should be close to the router.

Another consideration is insurance coverage. Will insurance carriers continue to reimburse patients at the same rates as they have been during COVID? As the emergency status of the pandemic loosens up, so may many of the regulations that

were imposed. If you have been reimbursed for your telehealth appointments, contact your insurance customer service representative and inquire what their policy is on future telemedicine versus face-to-face appointments.

All these factors must be considered when determining the pros and cons of face-to-face versus virtual appointments. If you feel that your psychiatric care would be better suited for an in-person visit, contact our office and make a request. We are currently reviewing these requests and will accommodate them safely as we transition patients back into our Princeton location while still using telehealth when applicable in your future care.

The “Trouble” with Generics

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If you are taking a generic, and suddenly become unstable, it may be a result of your pharmacy dispensing a generic from a different manufacturer. Katherine Eban’s Five-Step Guide to investigating your own drugs www.katherineeban.com/guide, patients can investigate the manufacturer of their medicine, and whether there has been problems with sterility (contamination) or data integrity (fraud). If there are problems with the manufacturer, patients can find another manufacturer from the FDA’s Orange Book, and request a change at their pharmacy.

Seasonal Affective Disorder

As daylight hours begin to decrease, some of us may begin to notice mild symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder. This disorder or SAD is a subtype of major depression which affects 4 - 6% of Americans. SAD symptoms include increased depression, increased appetite often accompanied by weight gain, and extreme fatigue.

These symptoms usually become evident in the Fall and Winter and go into remission in the Spring and

Summer. Raising awareness of SAD, it’s symptoms, and it’s treatment options is essential to helping patients seek appropriate clinical attention sooner. If you notice your depression worsens during the Fall and Winter, there are preventative measures you can make to lessen your symptoms of SAD. See the table below for guidance in implementing interventions. Also, always inform your treating clinician of your concerns.

CATEGORY	INTERVENTION
Lifestyle Changes	Physical activity Spending time outdoors Structured lifestyle Vacation in sunny regions Balanced diet
Antidepressants	Preventative/ Maintenance use of antidepressants
Light Therapy	Starting light therapy in the Fall before symptoms start Starting light therapy with mild symptoms
Psychotherapy	Continuation of therapy
Other	Vitamin D Relaxation techniques St. John’s Wort* Alternative treatments (osteopathy)

* If not already on an antidepressant.

Nussbaumer-Streit, B. et al. (2018) Implementing prevention of seasonal affective disorder from patients’ and physicians’ perspectives- a qualitative study. BMC Psychiatry, 18: 372.