

Integration of psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy by prescribing–medical psychologists: A psychobiosocial model of care.

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[McGrath, Robert E. \(Ed\); Moore, Bret A. \(Ed\). \(2010\). Pharmacotherapy for psychologists: Prescribing and collaborative roles. , \(pp. 105-131\). Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association, xv, 256 pp.](#)

Abstract

The impetus for psychologists to prescribe has been propelled by recognition of the critical need to increase access to care and the potential benefits of an integrative, pharmacotherapy approach. Therefore, it is incumbent on psychologists to develop a systematic approach to that integration. The strategic integration of psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy by prescribing–medical psychologists is an evolutionary approach to addressing the critical and increasing mental health needs of U.S. citizens. Combined psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy approaches integrate etiological analysis and treatment strategies based on biological, psychological, and sociological factors often encapsulated in the term biopsychosocial model of care (Engel, 1977). It is argued in this chapter that, because of their psychological training, prescribing–medical psychologists can apply the analysis of biological, social, and psychological etiologies and treatment strategies from a somewhat unique framework we call the “psychobiosocial model of care.” In the psychobiosocial model posited herein, the therapist–patient relationship and the patient’s phenomenological view of psychotherapy and medication management are central. Patient-specific resiliency and vulnerability factors are analyzed within each sphere of functioning. By assessing resilience and vulnerability within all dimensions of functioning, the psychobiosocial model places patient’s perceptions, personal values, and needs as the basis for deciding all forms of biological, psychological, and social interventions. We, both of us being prescribing–medical psychologists, have analyzed our own practices in an effort to elucidate the core elements in which the practice of psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy are combined by those whose core training is as psychologists. The common elements emerging from our approaches were combined in an effort to construct and propose a unique, psychologically based model built on psychologists’ unique training. If successful, this model should lead to treatment that can be replicated thereby serving as a framework for evidence-based research. Ideally, a refined model for prescribing–medical psychologists will help foster the evolution of quality, accessible, and integrated mental health care.

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