

Checklist of questions

Families often feel anxious and psychiatrists are usually busy: this can mean that you do not always know who to ask about your relative/friend's illness. It is a good idea to have a list of the things you want to know, ready before you have a meeting with any of the team involved in your relative's care.

This checklist is designed to help you get the information you need concerning the diagnosis, treatment and care plan of your relative/friend. These questions have been included as a framework for you to use: you may not find them all helpful and there may be others that are not included.

This assumes that your relative/friend is happy for the member of the team to discuss these issues with you. However, if your relative/friend is unwilling for information to be shared there will be a problem with confidentiality. It is probably best to work through this issue prior to any meetings so that you are aware of where you stand. It may be helpful to have a confidentiality agreement set up whilst your relative/friend is agreeable and co-operative (see section on planning for an emergency or crisis).

About the diagnosis

- What illness does my relative/friend have?
- What symptoms/signs suggest this?
- What is known about the causes of the illness?
- What is likely to happen in the future? Will it get better or worse?
- Where can we get more information about this disorder?
- If there is no diagnosis yet what are the possibilities?
- How long will it be before there is a diagnosis?
- What help will I get with dealing with the behaviour/symptoms in the meantime?

About the assessment

- What tests have been done?
- Will any more tests be needed?
- What are the results of the tests? How will these be acted upon?

About care and treatment

- What are the aims of the care and treatment?
- What part will the care co-ordinator play in my relative's care?
- Who else will be involved in the treatment?

- How often will you see our relative?
- What is your plan for treatment? How long will it last?
- Would psychotherapy (talking treatments) of any sort be helpful? If so, is it available locally?
- What happens if our relative/friend refuses treatment?

Care Programme Approach (CPA)

- Would you explain how the ICPA will be used to help our relative/friend?
- When will there be an ICPA meeting and will we be invited to it?

The family and the treatment

- Will the family/friend be involved in discussions concerning the treatment of our relative's illness?
- What can we do to help?
- Can we be referred to the Family Work Service?
- Are there any local self-help or carers' groups?

Getting help

- Who do we contact if we are worried about something?
- How can we get in touch with you?
- Who do we contact in an emergency?
- How can we get a second opinion (you are entitled to this)?

Medication

- What medication is to be used?
- What should the benefits of this medication be? Short-term / Long-term
- What are the possible side effects of this medication? Short-term / Long-term
- Why have you chosen this particular drug?
- Will it be necessary to take it for life?
- Are there any other drugs that could be used if this one does not work?
- What signs/symptoms might mean that the drug should be changed?
- What will happen if he/she stops taking the medication?
- Do you have any written information about this medication?

Hospital treatment

- What happens if there is no bed available?

- How long will he/she need to stay in?
- What arrangements will need to be in place in order for our relative/friend to leave hospital?
- If transport is difficult, can our relative/friend be housed near us?
- Can arrangements for Benefits be installed/reinstated immediately on discharge so financial security/housing does not become a problem?
- Who will inform utilities etc. that someone is admitted/discharged so that there is no danger of non-payment summons being incurred?
- If it is not appropriate for our relative/friend to return home, what other options are available in our area?
- Who can advise/inform us about this?

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