

Case Study #7. Referral for treatment

The patient is a 23-year-old woman who had her second child 4 weeks ago. She is in for a well-baby visit. The baby seems to be fine, but the mother is quite concerned about the baby's feeding and crying. She complains that the baby doesn't seem comfortable in taking her breast and feeding is not very pleasant. She also complains that the baby cries a lot and that she is having a hard time coping with it. You review her depression screening tool and see that she has endorsed a number of depression symptoms. After reviewing the results of the screening tool with her, you conduct a brief clinical interview and determine that she started to feel depressed and anxious about three months ago but has told no one. She has been experiencing lots of symptoms but has been reluctant to share her experiences until now. You tell her that she is probably experiencing a major depression and that there are effective and safe treatments—both medication and counseling or psychotherapy.

Question

1. What are your major considerations in deciding whether to treat this patient yourself or refer her for medication or psychotherapy?

You will want to know her history of depression, treatment history, whether she has responded to a particular form of treatment, and her preferences for treatment. You would also want to know if she is a danger to herself or her child or if she is experiencing any psychotic symptoms. You would also want to know how often she is breastfeeding.

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