

Case Study #8. Reassurance and education to engage a woman in PPD treatment

The patient is a 27-year-old woman who delivered her second child, a girl, about 6 weeks ago. You have determined, based on initial screening and a brief clinical assessment, that she is almost certainly depressed. She has no past history of depression and other psychiatric illness. She comes from a rural community about 45 miles away and is unaware of local mental health resources. She is very worried about what her family will think if she discloses how she is feeling. In addition, she is concerned about becoming a source of gossip in the community. Finally, she is concerned about the effects of her depression on her new baby and her other daughter, who is 2 years old.

Questions

1. How might you reassure your patient about her various worries regarding treatment?

There are several appropriate approaches that could be taken. First, you can talk to the patient about her goals with respect to her depression and her children. You can reassure her that her depression will be time-limited (she has no past history), but that it is likely to lessen more quickly if she gets help from a counselor. You can remind her that many of her friends will have experienced depression themselves, even if they have not revealed this to her.

2. How can you help her overcome barriers to treatment?

You can work with her to identify mental health counselors in her community (you may already have referral sources). You can coach her about how to speak to her husband and other family about depression. You can encourage her to speak with to the primary care physician in her home community about her depression. Finally, you will want to review her treatment options, so that she can determine whether she would like counseling or medication or both.

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