

Shrinking the Stigma of Psychiatry & Mental Illness

by Terri Kasper, Marketing Communications Director

What comes to mind when you think of a psychiatrist? Do you imagine a well-dressed, intelligent older man smoking a pipe asking his patient how they feel? Maybe you imagine a menacing “mad scientist” type doctor lacing up a patient’s straight jacket before locking him up in a padded room? Or do you just think they are all “shrinks?”



Fortunately, none of these accurately describe a psychiatrist. However, psychiatry and the field of mental health continue to face stigma and misconceptions. According to **Dr. Robert W. Marquis**, a psychiatrist in Mokena, Illinois, many people still believe psychiatry involves shock therapy and brain surgery. “But that’s changing,” said Dr. Marquis.

Psychiatry is the branch of medicine that is concerned with the study, treatment and prevention of mental illness, using both medical and psychological therapies. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, NAMI, a mental illness is a medical condition that disrupts a person’s thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning.

In general, a psychiatrist treats patients with the most serious mental illnesses such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and clinical depression. Because there is not a one-size fits all methodology for mental health treatment, each person needs to be individually evaluated. “There is a full range of services available,” says Marquis. “I’m not going to force them into some treatment if they don’t need it.”

Marquis has been practicing for 32 years and says during an initial visit he assesses what the patient needs. “It’s wrong to just assume we only medicate a patient, but I will assess if medication is needed,” Marquis explained.

Often psychiatrists work in conjunction with therapists to coordinate care for their patients. The psychiatrist manages their medication, while the therapist provides the psychotherapy, or talk therapy. Every other month, New Leaf counselors meet with Dr. Marquis to consult on their mutual clients to ensure the most appropriate care is being provided.

“Our goal for every patient is to get well,” said New Leaf Resources Executive Director **Terry Top**. “But sometimes their care needs are more than we can provide. While not everyone who comes to New Leaf will need to see a psychiatrist or be on medication,” said Top, “it his helpful to have trusted psychiatrists to refer our clients to when necessary.”

Healing usually involves a combination of emotional, physical, social, mental and spiritual aspects of a person’s life. Something that sets Dr. Marquis apart from mainstream psychiatrists is that he believes faith is a very important component of treatment. He looks for opportunities to share his Christian beliefs, which can be beneficial to his patients’ care.

“As an evangelical, I let them know that their salvation is what’s most important and make sure they know they can be saved.” It’s a reason to have hope.



For more information, call
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