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Psychotherapy resulted in successful release of a schizophrenic patient after 9 years of hospitalization

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Learning Goal:

Although clinicians tend to consider that pharmacotherapy is much more important than psychotherapy for schizophrenia, they should put more emphasis on psychotherapy or psychological intervention in its treatment, whether it is acute or chronic phase.

Abstract Text:

Introduction: Not a few psychiatric patients have been hospitalized for a long time in Japan. Most of them have been taking many kinds of psychotropic agents. The author reports a case that was successfully discharged after nine years of hospitalization.

Case report: A 49-year-old unmarried woman with depression was admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Her diagnosis was soon changed to schizophrenia because she developed auditory hallucination and delusion of negation. Despite many kinds of pharmacotherapy, she did not improve. At age 56, she was put in the care of this clinician (author). She had been taking several kinds of conventional antipsychotic agents and was excessively sedated. Parkinsonism caused appetite loss, marked salivation and gait disturbance. These antipsychotics were discontinued, and quetiapine and lithium carbonate were gradually increased up to 750mg/day and 800mg/day, respectively. Two months later, she had become active and had a good appetite with her parkinsonism greatly reduced. She still had hallucination and delusion, and said, "I cannot live until tomorrow." The clinician listened to her for 30 minutes once a week, and told her that she had improved both physically and psychiatrically. While she did not deny her degree of improvement, she complained of a shortened life. After dialogues with her continued for several months, she demanded to go shopping for the first time. Her ban of going out was lifted, and she often went to a neighboring supermarket. Six months later, she was allowed to go out alone to eat sushi. Most complaints except a shortened life were reduced. After some rehabilitation training, she was discharged from hospital after nine years.

Discussion: Antipsychotics added to the schizophrenic patient seemed to have worsened her symptoms. Psychotherapy may have been effective. Clinicians tend to prefer pharmacotherapy to psychotherapy for schizophrenia. Clinicians need to pay more attention to psychotherapy.

**ON THE HEALING POWER
OF HUMAN RECONNECTION**