



Mind and Heart Working Together

Medication Optimization at CooperRiis

The CooperRiis Healing Community provides comprehensive, compassionate, and community-based recovery interventions within its multi-site therapeutic milieu. CooperRiis' psychiatrists practice 'medication optimization' in collaboration with the input and decision-making of our residents.

Note: Our statements here reflect our belief that mental health challenges are not simply the result of a biochemical disorder which can be 'fixed' with the permanent use of high levels of medication. At the same time, we also know that the shorter-term use of medication can be life saving for some and that most of the residents at CooperRiis appear to benefit from longer-term use of the least (lowest) amount of medication which produces the desired result. Importantly, it is also critical for our residents to know not to cease or reduce their medications without collaboration and communication with our psychiatrist; quick reductions in medication dosage levels can cause symptoms to resume simply because of the sudden alteration of brain chemistry, not because of the 'illness' itself. Some of these 're-bound' symptoms can also cause serious and even life threatening consequences."

Medication optimization is an approach to mental health recovery which supports the judicious use or non-use of psychotropic medications based on evidence from methodologically sound and responsibly interpreted research studies. Medications are balanced with an array of other effective, recovery-based services and supports. The goal of all of these interventions is to improve and maximize the self-determination, functioning, and quality and meaning of the lives of our residents, whose well-being has been affected by mental health challenges. The medication optimization approach may include the postponing or avoidance of medications in lieu of other approaches or the combination of medication with other approaches in order to minimize the use of medications.

Medication optimization may also include:

1. recovery-based psychosocial supports and services,
2. sensitive and collaborative initiation of medication protocols,
3. timely medication tapering or withdrawal protocols,
4. nutrient support for the brain and the body and
5. regular reassessment of recovery status to guide shared decision making to adjust medication treatment.

CooperRiis emphasizes the importance of shared and collaborative decision-making. We encourage residents to be the responsible drivers of their healthcare, with the CooperRiis psychiatrists encouraging and valuing them as full partners. In this process CooperRiis' psychiatrists must also walk a fine line between resident empowerment and maintaining appropriate boundaries, which requires that they utilize their best judgment about when and what medication dosages to reduce (or to increase).

August 3, 2011