COURSE SYLLABUS

Psychopharmacology
MCP 5105
Fall 2011

Schedule: September 7th - November 9th
Room: Mission 307
Time: Wednesdays, 11:00 AM - 2:30 PM
Units: 2
Instructor: Keith Flower, M.D.
Phone: 415 548-3148
Email: keith.flower@gmail.com
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 10 – 11 AM or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course provides an overview of the use of medications for treating mental disorders. Our emphasis is on practical application: what should I know about the medicines my patients are taking? How do I help educate them about their medications? What positive effects and side effects might I see when they take medication? How can I better collaborate with medical practitioners and other mental health professionals? We use a case-based approach to review basic anatomical, physiological, and chemical characteristics of the nervous system to understand the rationale for using medications, along with their limitations, and side effects. We’ll also explore related ethical, historical, social, ethnic and cultural factors. In addition, we look at how therapists can work effectively with family members, physicians, and other members of the collaborative mental health care team.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:
When you complete this course, you will:
1. Understand and be conversant with fundamentals of neuroanatomy and neurophysiology as they relate to psychotropic medications; be familiar with major categories of psychotropic drugs, their rationale for use, mechanisms of action, common side effects, and drug interactions. The exams you pass in this class on these topics will help prepare you for handling questions from your patients, and for answering such questions on your standardized licensing tests.
2. Learn the process and techniques of referring a patient for medication evaluation or re-evaluation, and learn strategies for working collaboratively with other professionals. You’ll get practice and feedback on your use of these skills through class discussion, and from writing a formal referral for evaluation.

3. Be able to research and provide basic education to your client and his/her family about psychotropic medications, with experience and feedback gained by practicing such education in our class discussions, and in a class presentation you’ll make.

4. Understand ethical considerations and controversies in current pharmacological treatment of mental health patients. We’ll discuss such issues routinely together in class, and you’ll write a short paper exploring one of these issues.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance
Our course begins September 7, 2011 and meets every Wednesday through November 9, 2011. There will be 10 sessions, each lasting 3 hours. Students are expected to attend all class sections.

Teaching Methods
Instructional methods include lectures, discussion, audiovisual material, readings, writing, student presentations, and in-class discussions. If you have any special circumstances that make it difficult for you to learn using any of these teaching methods, please let me know and we’ll explore other arrangements.

Case Discussions
Each session we will discuss one case relevant to that session’s topic in some detail. Case studies will be handed out the week prior to their discussion. Students should read these cases carefully and prepare to discuss them.

Readings
In addition to the textbook chapters outlined in the course schedule below, articles of interest from professional journals may be required or recommended during the quarter. Please read assigned material (including case descriptions) before the session listed.

Exams
Three non-cumulative, one hour, in-class exams will be administered on the dates indicated below. The exams will consist of multiple choice, true/false, matching columns, and/or short answer questions, with items covering material from lectures and assigned readings. If an exam is to be missed, arrangements must be made with the instructor prior to the scheduled exam date.

Patient Education Presentation
Each student will be assigned a specific psychotropic medication to present to the class informally, as if you were educating a client about taking that medication. More information on the format for that presentation will be given in class, but you should
consider the class to be your client: please be able to educate us about the medication, teach us what makes it unique or different from other medicines in its class, answer basic questions a patient might have about it, and provide us a 1-2 page patient education handout (or email).

**Paper**
Write a short paper on a current and controversial topic that interests you related to the medical treatment of mental health disorders, exploring two or more different viewpoints on the issue (e.g., pros and cons) and providing your own synthesis and conclusion (i.e., which view do you support?). Further guidelines will be given in class, but you should aim for 5 – 8 pages of text, along with a page of references that support the arguments you presented. **Try not to write a paper on a topic you’re not interested in. Please get approval for your paper topic from me by contacting me about it by our third session.**

Examples of topics:
- ethics of pharmaceutical companies’ marketing strategies toward prescribing professionals
- controversies over efficacy of antidepressants or other psychotropic medications.
- advantages/disadvantages of HMO managed treatment in mental health
- ethics of direct to consumer marketing of prescription meds
- benefits/risks of electroconvulsive therapy
- informed consent issues in medical treatment
- pros/cons of use of drugs to treat addiction
- uses and abuses of pain medication or benzodiazepines (and/or poor medication prescribing practice by physicians)
- advantages/disadvantages of use of alternative medicine for psychiatry
- over-diagnosis of childhood (or adult) mental health disease
- pros/cons of use of stimulants in the treatment of ADHD
- pros/cons of use of psychotropics in a geriatric population
- …other controversial issues of your choice

**Written Referral for Medication Evaluation**
Write a 1-2 page letter of referral to a physician for a patient who needs evaluation for medication treatment (obfuscating any personal details for privacy).

**Evaluation**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in class discussion of cases/reads</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exams (20% each)</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client education presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written referral</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Content</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/7</td>
<td>Overview of course Basics of neuroanatomy and neurobiology</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/14</td>
<td>Neurophysiology: how do psychotropic drugs work?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/21</td>
<td>Drug abuse/dependence and their pharmacological treatments</td>
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<td>9/28</td>
<td>Depression and antidepresants</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/5</td>
<td>Ethical considerations in psychopharmacology; collaboration, making referrals.</td>
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<td>10/12</td>
<td>Pharmacological treatment of anxiety disorders, OCD, PTSD</td>
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<td>10/19</td>
<td>Psychotic disorders and antipsychotics</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/26</td>
<td>Bipolar disorder and mood stabilizers</td>
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<td>11/2</td>
<td>Medical conditions, pain, eating disorders, ADHD, cognitive disorders, sleep disorders, and their treatments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/9</td>
<td>Special topics in psychopharmacology: current controversies, research, neurocosmetics, alternative medicines</td>
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* Readings are in the Patterson text unless otherwise indicated.
**Instructor Bio**
I received a B.S in biochemistry at University of California, Davis; an M.D. from University of Nevada, and completed residency in psychiatry at California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco. I’ve been principal and co-investigator in research studying users’ experiences of psychotropic drugs (e.g., methamphetamine, MDMA, Salvia divinorum), and in research to treat addiction with both medications and psychotherapy. I’m interested in motivational enhancement therapy, pharmacogenomics, meditation, and in using emerging technology to diagnose and to deliver health care and education. I see my own private practice patients for medication treatment and psychotherapy.

**CIIS POLICIES:**

**Mid-semester Evaluation of Instruction:**
Halfway through the course, students are to be given the opportunity to provide informal, verbal comments to the instructor in a constructive spirit. This is a time for the instructor to receive feedback on his or her efforts, and also a time for students to reflect upon their own. This conversation is to be facilitated by a student chosen by the class. The instructor is to leave the room (or be offline if the course is an online one) while the facilitator is selected.