



## Questions to ask the psychiatrist

- What is the diagnosis? What is the nature of this illness from a medical point of view?
- How certain are you of this diagnosis? What other possibilities do you consider most likely, and why?
- If your current evaluation is a preliminary one, how soon before you will be able to provide a more definitive one?
- What is known about the cause of this particular illness?
- Did the physical examination include a neurological exam as well? If so, how extensive was it and what are the results?
- Are there any additional tests or exams that you would recommend at this point?
- What program of treatment do you think would be most useful? How will it be helpful?
- Will the treatment plan involve services by other specialists (i.e. neurologists, psychologists, mental health workers, practitioners, self help, etc.)
- What do you expect the treatment program to accomplish? About how long will it take? How often will you be seeing the patient?
- What is the best evidence that the patient is responding to treatment and how long will it take for these signs to appear?
- What medications do you plan to use? (Ask for the name of the drug(s) and the dosage level). What are the side-effects of this medication and what do you expect it to accomplish? What risks

are associated with the medication? How soon will we know if the medication is effective? How will we know?

- Are there other medications that might also be appropriate? If so, why do you prefer the one you have chosen?
- How do you plan to monitor the medication? What symptoms indicate that it should be raised, lowered or changed in any way?
- Are you currently treating other patients with this illness? (Psychiatrists vary in their level of experience with severe or long-term mental illness. It is helpful to know how involved the psychiatrist is in treating these problems).
- If hospitalized, which hospital will it be? Will the family be included in discharge planning? What are the laws pertaining to committal and compulsory treatment?
- What do you see as the family's role in the treatment plan? In particular, how much access will the family have to individual treatment providers?
- Who will be able to answer our questions when you are not available?
- When are the best times, and what are the most dependable ways to get in touch with you?
- How familiar are you with the activities and initiatives of local community support groups for both the patient and the family?
- What do you believe about "recovery" and how do you involve the patient in meaningful participation of their treatment?

## Some Useful Questions to Ask For Special Situations:

### If your relative has manic or depressive symptoms:

- Did you perform a thyroid screening? If so, what was the result? If not, do you think it would be appropriate to perform one?

### If your relative is taking antipsychotic medication:

- Are you, or will you be monitoring for depression? What arrangements will be made to ensure daily medication supervision after hospital discharge? Will regular blood testing be necessary? If so, how often, and where will it be done?

### If your relative is over 45 years of age:

- What effect will the medication have on cardiac functions? Have you obtained an electrocardiogram? If so, what are the results? If not, do you think it would be advisable to do so? Have tests been done to eliminate all other medical conditions?

