

## ***Why Have I Been Referred to a Clinical and Health Psychologist?***

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### **Reason for Referral**

As part of the evaluation process or as a part of medical treatment, doctors often refer individuals for psychological services. The reasons for psychological referrals vary widely depending on the identified presenting problem(s), your doctor's questions, concerns, assessment, and treatment planning needs, as well as your own stated concerns. For example, an individual with newly diagnosed lung cancer may be referred for supportive counseling to facilitate medical and emotional adjustment to his/her condition. Similarly, someone reporting multiple depressive symptoms may be referred for expert evaluation and psychological treatment.

Medical doctors frequently work closely with psychologists and other allied health professionals since there is a widely recognized relationship between mind and body functioning.

### **Typical Referrals**

Undergoing medical assessment or having an acute or chronic medical illness can be stressful for individuals of all ages. Clinical and health psychologists may see patients who develop anxiety, depression, sadness, work or family problems, irritability, and/or anger. Behavioral and emotional factors are often a focus in pre-and post-surgical intervention and are important in improving the outcome of a variety of medical treatments. Medical conditions often impact on work, play, and family. Referrals for improving coping and for stress or pain management are frequent.

### **Clinical and Health Psychologists**

Clinical and health psychologists are licensed, doctoral-level service providers specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of behavioral, mental, and nervous system disorders. Our Clinical and health psychologists have earned Ph.D. or Psy.D. degrees and have completed internship training in American Psychological Association programs. Medical doctors and psychologists work together to improve the quality of health care and to maximize treatment outcome. They strive to provide services that dovetail with current medical treatments and patient goals.

### **Psychological Services**

The main services provided by clinical and health psychologists include, but are not limited to, assessment and treatment.

Psychological assessment involves the collection of background information for diagnostic and treatment planning purposes. During an interview, a clinical and health psychologist may ask a variety of questions related to your medical, social, and psychological history. To collect this information in a thorough but efficient manner, you are likely to be asked to complete questionnaires involving the above areas as well as to determine your areas of concern.

Psychologists are experts at helping your doctor understand you as a "whole person" with specific strengths, needs, and concerns.

### **Psychological Treatment**

A clinical and health psychologist will use a variety of strategies such as talking to you about problem areas, examining patterns of behavior, and teaching you stress and relaxation techniques to help you feel more comfortable, to improve your functioning at home or work, to enhance coping skills and to assist you in achieving medical

treatment goals.

There are a variety of therapeutic approaches. Supportive, cognitive-behavioral, and insight-oriented are amongst the most common.

Supportive therapy focuses on the present to facilitate coping and adjustment, cognitive/behavioral therapy will typically emphasize thought processes and behaviors and methods for increased coping. Insight-oriented therapies aim to help patients gain insight regarding the origins of psychological problems. Some therapists utilize a specific approach, while others may combine approaches based on the identified problems and needs of the patient. Treatment typically occurs once/week for approximately 45-50 minutes, during which time you and psychologist discuss issues related to the presenting problems and treatment goals.

Many patients ask if clinical and health psychologists prescribe medications. While knowledgeable about a variety of treatment modalities, including medication, psychologists are not trained as medical doctors (M.D.s) and your medicine will continue to be prescribed by your medical physician.

### **Psychological Testing**

Psychological testing has a long history back to the assessment of general abilities, memory, personality, and other more specific skills such as motor speed and coordination. Psychologists have extensive training and expertise in the construction, interpretation, and use of psychological tests. The use of standardized measures greatly enhances the assessment procedure by providing information that is objective and interpretable regarding the severity and type of problems experienced.

Today's sophisticated tests can provide information as to how typical or unusual a particular problem is for people of diverse ages and backgrounds.

Methods such as neuropsychological testing can often pick up on subtle types of difficulties, such as learning disability, the effects of mild head injury or the early effects of brain disease that may not be detected by medical laboratory tests.

### **Common Concerns.**

It is not uncommon for individuals with medical problems or pain to feel concerned about seeing a clinical and health psychologist. A referral to a psychologist involving medical problems or pain does not mean your doctor thinks it is "all in your head." Pain or medical problems can lead to increased tension or reduced coping and depression, and vice versa. Once individuals learn more, they find that psychological services are often a beneficial part of their overall health care with minimal danger of side effects.