Thursday Memo – March 21, 2019

No local TMM this week. Please write if the spirit moves you or dust off something you have been working on and give it a go on the TMM.

In lieu of a local story, Carole Upshur, EdD, Professor Emeritas, sent me this story below. She wrote that it seems very apropos for family docs. Agreed.

Here is her intro:

This is a story I read on the American Psychological Association Health Psychology listserv that I thought would be very relevant for our providers even though the events took place 20 years ago. I am posting with her permission and review of my edits. Ms. O’Connor has worked in pharmaceutical research and is completing a PsyD in clinical psychology.

Why not? (TMM editor’s title)

My mother’s Parkinson’s symptoms were manageable until my brother (her son) went through and lost a fight with acute myeloid leukemia. She then started to have physical pain symptoms that didn’t abate despite numerous trips to specialists.

We decided to have her see Don Dubin, a therapist who had learned to work with chronic pain patients and was an early advocate of mind-body medicine. On the day of her first appointment, Mom could barely move, she was in so much pain. She managed to push her walker into the office, complaining that this was a waste of money. I introduced her to Don, and left. I came back to pick her up 50 minutes later, and found them both smiling and having an enjoyable discussion. Then my mother got up from the chair with no struggle and no pain. Don, the therapist, asked if my mother wanted to come back, and Mom smiled and said, “Why not?” Fifty minutes. Changed our worlds forever.

There were times when I thought my mother had totally lost her ability to process. I remember a scary morning when she was upset about everything and didn’t recognize me, but I was able to get her into Don’s office. Sometimes Don talked to her over the phone first, and this calmed her down enough to get the process of normal life going again. And after the visit, she’d be herself again.

When Mom was on her own and experienced a hallucination, I learned to ask, ”Mom, what are you upset about?” and within minutes, she could figure it out, and we both learned the hallucinations were physical manifestations of sad and scary emotions. Until meeting Don
Dubin, my mom had never been to a therapist, and had never been able to talk with anyone about her emotions. In addition to being a soldier, one of the first women admitted into the Army when the U.S. entered WWII, Mom was also a violinist in a symphony, an active artist in many media, a really expressive writer, and a business woman who supported three kids through high school and college after the death of our father. But speaking about emotions was not something people did, especially not well-brought up young ladies.

We have been taught the societal and economic forces for silencing us and hiding emotions. Don Dubin’s work taught us that by accepting ourselves, with all our painful emotions, we can learn - at any age and with any amount of physical difficulty - how to be whole and participate fully in life. Those last six years with my mother were the best of our lives, when we had a real connection and relationship, based on love and admiration, not dependence.

Ms. O’Connor also mentioned that families and physicians need to carefully monitor the side effects of Parkinson’s medications, consider medication half-life, prevent overdosing, and pair medication with adequate nutritional planning, exercise, and support such as described here. I can’t help but think of other patients who would benefit from this type of integrated physical and mental health care-trauma survivors, other types of chronic pain patients, and those with dementia and other disabilities.

You can contact SL O’Connor directly at:  [www.EmotionBasedMedicine.com](http://www.EmotionBasedMedicine.com)

For a list of books on pain and mind-body medicine written by and for physicians and therapists, see also:  [www.tmshelp.com](http://www.tmshelp.com)