



Guidance for Psychological Therapists: Enabling conversations with clients taking or withdrawing from prescribed psychiatric drugs – training notes.

Course materials and suggested seminar questions

This is the list of course materials, followed by some suggested seminar questions that can be used following the recorded content. The use of the questions is optional for facilitators and is offered as an accompaniment that may help enable conversations with trainees. It is your choice as to how to break the materials and when to hold discussion groups / reflection time.

Recorded talks

1. An introduction to the Guidance for Psychological Therapists Training – (includes a 5-minute montage of people talking about their experiences) Dr James Davies	Mandatory	20 mins
2. The role of the 'Medical Model' - Dr John Read	Mandatory	28 mins
3. The Role of the Psychological Therapist – what trainees need to consider - Dr Anne Guy	Mandatory	30 mins
Three talks by Professor Joanna Moncrieff		
4. How do psychiatric drugs really work? Models of drug action	Mandatory	20 mins
5. Understanding Antidepressants	Mandatory	13 mins
6. Understanding Benzodiazepines and Z drugs	Optional	5 mins
7-10. Interviews with people who had taken and experienced problems withdrawing from psychiatric drugs – Stevie Lewis	1 x Mandatory Others optional	15-20 mins each
11. Opportunities for therapists to support clients to safely withdraw from psychiatric drugs – Dr Anne Guy	Mandatory	22 mins
12. Further implications for practice – working with others to support clients – Dr Anne Guy	Optional	16 mins

Suggested Seminar Questions

Please note We are aware that some trainees may find the content of these training materials difficult due to a personal relationship with the subject. We suggest that facilitators transparently address the potential of this reaction at the beginning of the training, and advocate that as with many aspects of training as a therapist, trainees look after themselves and seek help from their support networks if needed.*

You could choose to watch the first talk with the group to then have a discussion about possible impacts of the material as a whole.

1. An introduction to the Guidance for Psychological Therapists Training - Dr James Davies

Recap: This talk provides a summary of prescribing trends, highlights the importance for therapists to know more in light of increased levels of prescribing, summarises the guidance aims, describes how psychiatric drugs have been approached historically in the field, and explains the guidance will address how therapists can best support client's decision making around such drugs. A 5-minute montage of people talking about their experiences taking and withdrawing from psychiatric drugs (mainly antidepressants) is also included in this talk.

Possible seminar questions:

1. At the beginning of this training how do you feel about learning about this topic?
2. How did you respond to hearing people's experiences?
3. How relevant do you feel this material is to you as a trainee therapist?
4. Are you aware of any assumptions you have regarding psychiatric drugs?
5. What gaps in your knowledge are you aware of when considering the topic?

Facilitator seminar notes or for feedback on pilot

2. The role of the 'Medical Model' - Dr John Read

Recap: This talk describes the dominance of the bio-medical model and how this influences our cultural understanding of emotional and mental distress, the use of diagnosis versus an understanding based on social determinants, the role of the pharmaceutical industry, and finally has a summary of the main effects, adverse consequences and possible withdrawal reactions for different classes of psychiatric drugs.

Possible seminar questions:

1. From your own background and previous experiences do you have any assumptions, beliefs, or held attitudes towards the concept of the bio-medical model?
2. Have you worked in a professional setting where there was an adopted position toward the medical model?
3. What are the key influences that have shaped your views of the medical model for mental health?
4. Any reactions to the information about possible withdrawal experiences?

Facilitator seminar notes or for feedback on pilot

3. The Role of the Psychological Therapist – what trainees need to consider - Dr Anne Guy

Recap: This talk outlines what a therapist needs to be aware of about psychiatric drug dependence, identifies ethical considerations and explores four opportunities therapists have to support clients. These include supporting informed consent, exploring clients' understanding and experience of prescribed drugs, and how the bio-medical model impacts the practice of therapy (e.g., what language we use).

Possible seminar questions:

1. How does your preferred theoretical framework lead you to think about the bio-medical model and the role and function of prescribed drugs in a client's life?
2. What is your relationship to the medical model for emotional distress as an individual? Are there any contradictions between the two?
3. How comfortable are you with giving a client medical information regarding prescribed drugs? What would help this develop?
4. Do you think that being informed about the effects of prescribed drug dependence and withdrawal will alter your practice?
5. Are there any ethical challenges you foresee when considering an informed approach to working with clients who are taking or have taken prescribed drugs?

Facilitator seminar notes or for feedback on pilot

Three talks by Professor Joanna Moncrieff

- 4. How do psychiatric drugs really work? Models of drug action**
- 5. Understanding Antidepressants**
- 6. Understanding Benzodiazepines and Z drugs**

Recap: These summarise the history of how these drugs have been talked about and marketed, contrasted with the lack of evidence that any class of psychiatric drug works by targeting an underlying biological disease mechanism for the supposed condition or symptom (including so-called chemical imbalances). The drug specific talks cover evidence of efficacy, issues with evidence, possible adverse effects and issues with withdrawal.

Possible seminar questions:

1. What was your response to the information given? How did it fit with your existing understanding of how such drugs work?
2. How does your preferred theoretical framework lead you to think about the role and function of prescribed drugs in my client's life? How does that fit with this information?
3. Which drugs do you most commonly hear about from your clients?
4. Are you familiar with their common effects and withdrawal symptoms?

Facilitator seminar notes or for feedback on pilot

7-10. Interviews with people who had taken and experienced problems withdrawing from psychiatric drugs – Stevie Lewis

Recap: *There are 4 films interviewing Georgina, Liz, Sarah and Sandra in turn. Trainees are encouraged to view at least Georgina's – as someone who has experienced withdrawal and gone on to train as a counsellor she has particularly useful insights.*

Possible seminar questions

1. What impression did the interview/s seen create?
2. Any implications for client work?

Facilitator seminar notes or for feedback on pilot

11. Opportunities for therapists to support clients to safely withdraw from psychiatric drugs – Dr Anne Guy

Recap: This talk summarises the different levels of engagement a therapist can choose to make on this topic for their clients, from understanding one's own beliefs, being able to hear a client's experiences of dependence and / or withdrawal, being able to flag it, information sharing and finally directly supporting withdrawal. It also provides essential information to enable these and how to access more detailed resources if needed.

Possible seminar questions

1. What level of engagement did you decide to aim for?
2. Is there anything you need to do to make that happen? (Discuss with supervisor, further reading?)
3. What stopped you, if anything, from aiming for a deeper level of engagement?

Facilitator seminar notes or for feedback on pilot

12. Further implications for practice – working with others to support clients – Dr Anne Guy (optional)

Recap: This talk considers the key factors in deciding whether to contact a prescriber or other colleague on a clients' behalf including the practicalities of how, from email formats to different collaborative models available. This module is likely to be most helpful to those working in multidisciplinary settings.

Possible seminar questions

1. Given your current workplace, what are the possible channels of communication with other people involved in the care of your clients?
2. What have your experiences been of working with others?
3. Might it be helpful to find out more about multidisciplinary models of work in cases of prescribed psychiatric drug withdrawal?
4. What is the likely impact of contact or collaboration with others on the therapeutic relationship?

Facilitator seminar notes or for feedback on pilot

Conclusion

Please note Some trainees may have found some of the content difficult to process, and may need to gain some extra support to make sense of the material. We advocate a message to all trainees that they look after themselves and take any difficult feelings provoked by this material to their support networks.*

Having seen all of the material, or the relevant chosen content you have selected, it is suggested that you end with a seminar and some reflective questions.

Seminar questions:

1. Now that you have been exposed to this material, do you feel you have had any emotional reaction to it?
2. Has the training got further implications for your training and therapeutic practice, if so in what ways?
3. How do you now feel about working with clients who are taking prescribed drugs?
4. How do you now feel about working with clients who want to withdrawal from prescribed drugs?

Facilitator seminar notes or for feedback on pilot