

Mental Health Experience

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Nikole Lucero

IM 6

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I have some experience with psychiatric patients. I worked in a memory care unit that had patients with both Dementia and Alzheimer's. These patients were difficult to redirect when they were angry and kicking or pushing the locked doors to get out. It would catch me off guard when they would ask me where their parents or brothers and sisters went. At times some of them would get combative and throw objects when they were confused as to who I was. There was a few of the patients that would wander around the locked unit and into other patients living quarters and take things thinking it was theirs. One time I went to give a patient his medication and I couldn't find him in his room (this wasn't like him) I thought I had looked everywhere, so, we searched the rest of the locked unit getting worried he might have eloped or wandered off somehow. It turns out he was confused and sitting in the back of his closet on the floor with the doors closed thinking he was a child playing hide and seek.

During my time in modules 3 & 4 I had a few psychiatric patients on our units due to COVID-19 and the patients being moved around from the COVID floors. In this time, I met a few people with different psychiatric illnesses but the one that stands out the most is a woman who was so sweet, one moment she treated everyone like her grandchild, then the next she was throwing her lunch tray at myself and the nurse telling us to get out while screaming profanities at us. Because I wasn't new to this behavior, I tried to avoid her getting angrier and handed it over to the nurse. She handled it great she didn't let the patient push her around, she wasn't scared, and she remained kind and professional the entire time.

Before I worked in memory care I had never dealt with this type of patient and it was a shock to see the behaviors for the first time. However, when I was working there, they didn't treat the situations like they were anything special so we all just went along with it. Now knowing that psychiatric patients aren't all people running around acting like there were voices in their head, I can see the many different types of people that have mental illness. Between anxiety, depression, PTSD, and many others I have

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seen mental illness most of my life with my family members I just didn't know that it was all categorized together.

Anxiety and depression have played a big role in my life the last 6 years as I'm sure many other people have as I know it is quite common these days. I never knew these things were considered a mental illness until I did my PICU clinical last module. When I learned that eating disorders and suicidal ideations are also mental illnesses. Like many Americans I wouldn't talk about my struggles thinking it was just me or I wasn't that bad off, I didn't think I needed help. Being so fortunate as to be a stay-at-home mom the first 5 years of motherhood I thought I shouldn't be complaining because not everyone gets to experience this life. I have done much better this past year and now know there are many people in that boat, and they do need help, patients don't need to be trying to commit suicide to get help with mental illness.

I only have a fear that I will get more things thrown at me and get hurt. Other than that, I don't have concerns. The expectations I have for the mental health portion of this module would be to learn how to deal with the behavior of psych patients better than I was trained to on the memory care unit. When I worked there, I felt like we were thrown to the wolves to figure out their behavior on our own. I didn't do a very good job at redirecting them as they would usually get angrier with me and start swinging. I am also excited to be learning more about medications. They are hard for me to learn and remember but I really like the feeling when I finally get them down and can recognize them in a clinical setting.

How do you talk to people with mental disorders in order to keep them calm? Do the medications just help with symptoms or do they help mental health patients live normal lives? Can a nurse refuse a combative patient just because they are scared to get hit?

