Week 4: DQ #4

The Faces Interactive Module contains interviews with individuals diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder and Dysthymic Disorder.

MAJOR DEPRESSION

Major depression is one of the most common and debilitating forms of psychological disorder. People who are suffering an episode of major depression experience an unusually sad mood, diminished interest in life activities, disturbances in sleeping and eating, feelings of worthlessness, and thoughts of suicide. In order to be classified as major depressive episodes, these symptoms must persist for at least two weeks.

Case of Tara

Tara has been suffering profound episodes of major depression for the past 15 years. At the time of this interview, she has been enjoying a remission in her symptoms, perhaps as a result of the extended series of electroconvulsive therapies that she has undergone. In the first segment of the interview, we hear that Tara experiences two of the defining symptoms of depression including negative affect and disturbed sleep. She describes herself as feeling hopeless and bleak, as if she is in a deep, dark nine foot hole from which she cannot emerge. These feelings are different from a passing depressed mood that goes away after a couple of days. Her disturbed sleep is evidenced by the fact that she sleeps for 22 hours a day for entire weekends.

A) Referencing the assessment area of the Faces Interactive Guide for Major Depression, direct students to form groups of 4-5 and develop a scenario of how Tara would have been treated for her symptoms 300 years ago. Would she have been diagnosed with Major Depression? What other diagnoses would she have potentially been diagnosed with?

B) Through Faces Interactive, have students access the case report for Tara. Ask them to research current treatments that might be successful for Tara and develop a treatment plan based on their research.

DYSTHYMIC DISORDER

A person with dysthymic disorder has a chronic, long term, low level depression that interferes with their life. The symptoms which are long lasting and pervasive may seem more like an aspect of the person’s personality rather than a psychological disorder. Although dysthymic disorder and major depression have
an underlying depressed mood in common, the difference is in the severity and duration of the symptoms. Dysthymic disorder is less severe.

**Case of Robert**

Robert describes his sad, lonely life. He lives alone in a small apartment with few acquaintances and no hobbies. He remembers being sad all his life. At times, he thinks his condition is due to the bullies that picked on him as a child, other times he blames his mother. In any case, his current lifestyle may be contributing to his persistent low level depression. At the time of the interview his house was a mess, and he had no motivation to do anything about it. He goes to work occasionally but spends most of his days isolated in his apartment, eating, watching TV and masturbating. Robert says he wants to get better but shows no inclination to follow through. He receives disability checks from social security and one gets the impression from the interview that he enjoys working the system. It seems clear he has a persistent, low level depression, but it is not severe enough to be diagnosed as major depression. He doesn’t seem to be able to motivate himself as his only goal is to continue with his current life.

**Suggested Classroom Activities**

A) After reviewing the clinical questions and watching the interview with Robert, ask the students to generate additional clinical questions they would have liked to ask? Why do these questions interest them?

B) After reviewing the interview with Robert, have the class discuss why Robert was diagnosed with Dysthymia rather than Major Depression.

**BIPOLAR DISORDER**

Bipolar disorder is a mood disorder that involves episodes of both mania and depression. Affecting about 1 percent of the adult population, bipolar disorder frequently begins in adolescence or early adulthood, and may persist for life.

**Case of Bernie**

Bernie describes his struggles with bipolar disorder. As a teenager, he began to experience dramatic emotional shifts, including periods of extreme agitation and mania. In turn, these periods were followed by protracted periods of depression. Although these alternating moods led to significant problems in Bernie’s life, five years passed before he was finally diagnosed. Bernie has suffered from Bipolar Disorder for 15 years. Although the disorder has created significant problems in
his life, therapy has helped him learn a great deal about his illness and about his own personal needs

**Suggested Classroom Activities**

A) Direct students to the Bipolar Disorder Research Summary ([http://www.mhsanctuary.com/bipolar/network.htm](http://www.mhsanctuary.com/bipolar/network.htm)) where they can review the treatments listed on the page. After they have reviewed the information, ask them to create a treatment plan for Bernie. Given his case history listed on Faces, which treatment would be the most useful to him? Why?

B) Ask students to print and complete the case report for Bernie under the assessment link on Faces Interactive. Much of the needed information can be found in Bernie’s answers to the clinical questions in the Interview section. Sections requiring an understanding of the disorder, and the treatments for it can be completed in class. In what ways does Bernie meet the diagnostic criteria for Bipolar Disorder? Create a multiaxial description of Bernie (Axis I-IV).