

Psychopharmacology for Psychotherapists

Psychotropic medications are a routine part of mental health treatment, yet psychotherapists are often asked to navigate medication-related conversations without being prescribers themselves. Clients may have questions about how medications work, whether side effects are expected, how long a medication may take to work, or whether medication is helping. Therapists are also uniquely positioned to observe changes in symptoms, functioning, adherence, and behavior over time and to communicate these observations as part of collaborative care.

Psychopharmacology for Psychotherapists provides clinicians with an accessible, clinically relevant foundation in psychopharmacology while maintaining a clear distinction between the roles of prescribing and non-prescribing professionals. Participants will begin by examining the biopsychosocial model and the neurobiological foundations of psychiatric treatment, including neuron structure, neurotransmission, major neurotransmitter systems, and basic principles of pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics.

The webinar then translates this science into practical knowledge of commonly used psychotropic medications. Major medication categories—including antidepressants, mood stabilizers, antipsychotics, anxiolytics, medications used in ADHD, sleep medications, and medications used in substance use treatment—will be reviewed with attention to mechanisms of action, common indications, side effects, safety considerations, and monitoring needs. Emerging and alternative approaches in mental health treatment will also be introduced.

Most importantly, the webinar focuses on what psychotherapists can do with this knowledge. Participants will explore medication adherence and ambivalence, culturally responsive medication conversations, recognition of clinical red flags, communication with prescribers, measurement-based care, and strategies for integrating psychotherapy with pharmacological treatment. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) principles will illustrate how therapists can help clients respond more flexibly to thoughts, emotions, stigma, and uncertainty surrounding medication while remaining within the psychotherapist’s scope of practice.

The goal is not to teach psychotherapists to prescribe. Rather, it is to help clinicians become more informed members of the treatment team and more effective partners to clients navigating mental health treatment.

Target Audience

Psychologist Social Workers Counselors
Teachers Therapists Case Managers
Marriage and Family Therapists Nurses
This seminar is for intermediate to advanced level clinicians

Learning Objectives

At the end of this seminar, participants will be able to:

1. Explain how the biopsychosocial model and basic principles of neuroscience inform the use of psychotropic medications in mental health treatment.
2. Describe fundamental principles of psychopharmacology, including neurotransmission, pharmacodynamics, pharmacokinetics, drug-receptor interactions, efficacy, potency, and medication safety.
3. Differentiate major classes of psychotropic medications according to their common clinical uses, mechanisms of action, potential side effects, and monitoring considerations.
4. Identify medication-related clinical concerns that warrant communication or coordination with a prescribing professional, including significant side effects, changes in functioning, adherence difficulties, and other clinical red flags.
5. Apply collaborative, patient-centered strategies for discussing medication adherence, ambivalence, cultural considerations, and treatment goals while maintaining appropriate professional scope of practice.

Outline

Begin 6 PM ET

Foundations of Psychopharmacology

Understanding Psychotropic Medications

Psychopharmacology in Psychotherapy Practice

End 8 PM ET



The Presenter

Dr. Sarah Shevchuk, Psy.D., earned her doctorate in clinical psychology from the Georgia School of Professional Psychology in 2011. With specialized training in the treatment of serious and persistent mental illness from the Cleveland VA Medical Center, Dr. Shevchuk has provided psychological services throughout New York State, including in state prisons, psychiatric hospitals, and within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

She has held several pivotal roles, including Residential Crisis Treatment Program Coordinator, Psychological Evaluation Coordinator, and Inpatient Clinical Coordinator. For the past five years, Dr. Shevchuk has concentrated on integrative mental health care, particularly within Primary Care Mental Health Integration. She has also held various academic appointments throughout her career.

Dr. Shevchuk has chaired numerous committees dedicated to mental health environments of care, program evaluation, and process improvement, drawing on her Lean Six Sigma Yellow and Green Belt certifications. She has been actively involved in the national deployment of evidence-based psychotherapies within the Department of Veterans Affairs. Additionally, Dr. Shevchuk has served as a major rotation preceptor and assessment supervisor for an APA-accredited predoctoral psychology internship program.

Identifying as a generalist, Dr. Shevchuk is largely informed by cognitive-behavioral therapy and acceptance and commitment therapy. She emphasizes care that is recovery-oriented, patient-centered, and inclusive of holistic health and wellness. Early in her career, Dr. Shevchuk conducted research in biological sciences and neuroscience, focusing on the impact of psychoactive substances on brain cells involved in pain pathways.

Outside of her professional life, Dr. Shevchuk enjoys spending time with her family during what she humorously refers to as her “Hockey-Soccer-Dance-Cheer-Basketball-Lacrosse and Gymnastics Mom Era.” Despite her Ukrainian surname, she proudly identifies as an American of Italian descent, and her neighborhood delights in her Sunday suppers.

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This seminar has been reviewed and approved by Keith Hannan, Ph.D., Laura Davie, LICSW, Tina Jenkins, Psy.D., and Loreen Yearick, MSN, RN. This approval expires on March 1, 2028.

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