

Something New

During my five-week psychiatry rotation at Elmhurst Hospital Center, I was exposed to a range of new experiences and treatment approaches. I learned how to perform psychiatric evaluations, complete mental status exams, and assess patients for depression, anxiety, psychosis, and suicide risk. I also observed the use of different psychiatric medications, including antipsychotics, antidepressants, mood stabilizers, and long-acting injectable medications. Working with multiple attendings, residents, nurses, social workers, and case managers helped me understand the importance of teamwork in psychiatric care. As the rotation progressed, I became more comfortable identifying symptoms of common psychiatric disorders and understanding how treatment plans are developed for each patient.

Skills, Challenges, and Action Plan

One of the most important skills I developed during this rotation was communication. Elmhurst serves a very diverse patient population, and I cared for patients from many different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Some patients were easy to talk to, while others were guarded, paranoid, or unwilling to share information. I learned how important it is to remain patient, listen carefully, and build trust before asking difficult questions. One challenge I faced was presenting psychiatric patients during rounds. Psychiatric histories can be very detailed, and I initially had difficulty deciding which information was most important to include. To improve, I paid close attention to how residents and attendings presented patients and asked for feedback after my presentations. Over time, I became more organized and confident when discussing patient cases.

Another challenge was interviewing patients experiencing acute psychosis or severe mania. Some patients had disorganized thoughts, poor insight, or difficulty answering questions. These situations taught me to stay calm, avoid confrontation, and focus on building rapport. By the end of the rotation, I felt much more comfortable speaking with patients who had severe psychiatric illnesses. In the future, I would like more experience with psychiatric medication management and treatment planning. My action plan is to continue reviewing psychopharmacology, practice mental status examinations during future rotations, and seek feedback from providers whenever possible to strengthen my psychiatric knowledge.

Memorable Experiences

One memorable experience involved a patient who was admitted with severe psychosis after stopping his medications and using cannabis regularly. When he first arrived, he was paranoid, hearing voices, and had difficulty trusting the staff. During his hospitalization, I was able to observe how medications, therapy, and support from the treatment team helped improve his symptoms. By the time he was discharged, he was calmer, more organized, and able to participate in treatment. This experience taught me how important medication adherence and follow-up care are for patients with chronic psychiatric illnesses. It also showed me how mental health conditions can affect every part of a person's life. The communication and patient-centered care skills I learned from this case will be useful across all medical specialties, not just psychiatry.

Overall Reflection and Perspective

This rotation taught me a lot about myself as a future healthcare provider. I learned that I enjoy talking with patients and building relationships with them, even when conversations are challenging. I also learned that I am capable of adapting to difficult situations and continuing to improve through practice and feedback. My perspective on mental illness changed during this rotation. Before starting, I mainly focused on psychiatric diagnoses and medications. After working with patients in an inpatient psychiatric unit, I gained a greater appreciation for the personal and social challenges they face every day. I now better understand the importance of treating patients with empathy, respect, and compassion. Overall, this rotation was a valuable experience that helped me grow both personally and professionally.