

Sample Questions to Ask the Psychiatrist

1. What is your diagnosis? What is the nature of this condition from a medical point of view?
2. What is known about how we can avoid future episodes or making this disorder worse in the future?
3. How certain are you of this diagnosis? If you're not certain, what other possibilities do you consider most likely, and why?
4. Did the physical examination include a neurological exam? If so, how extensive was it, and what were the results?
5. Are there any additional tests or exams that you would recommend at this point?
6. Would you advise an independent opinion from another psychiatrist at this point?
7. What program of treatment do you think would be most helpful? How will it be helpful?
8. Will this program involve services by other specialists (i.e., neurologist, psychologist, allied health professionals)? If so, who will be responsible for coordinating these services?
9. Who will be able to answer our questions at times when you're not available?
10. What kind of therapy do you plan to use, and what will be the contribution of the psychiatrist to the overall program of treatment?

11. What do you expect this program to accomplish? About how long will it take, and how frequently will you and the other specialists be seeing the patient?
12. What will be the best evidence that the patient is responding to the program, and how soon will it be before these signs appear?
13. What do you see as the family's role in this program of treatment? In particular, how much access will the family have to the individuals who are providing the treatment?
14. If your current evaluation is a preliminary one, how soon will it be before you will be able to provide a more definite evaluation of the patient's disorder?
15. What medication do you propose to use? (Ask for name and dosage level.) What is the biological effect of this medication, and what do you expect it to accomplish? What are the risks associated with the medication? How soon will we be able to tell if the medication is effective, and how will we know?
16. Are there other medications that might be appropriate? If so, why do you prefer the one you have chosen?
17. Are you currently treating other patients with these symptoms? (Psychiatrists vary in their level of experience with severe or long-term mental health conditions, and it is helpful to know how involved the psychiatrist is with treatment of the kind of problem that your relative has.)
18. When are the best times, and what are the most dependable ways for getting in touch with you?
19. How do you monitor medications and what symptoms indicate that they should be raised, lowered or changed?
20. How familiar are you with the activities of NAMI and of our NAMI State Organization?