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Testimonial: CRNP

As a patient with bipolarism, I have extensive experience with the mental health system, my condition, compliance and practitioners.

One phase of bipolarism is hypomania and mania. Without sufficient medical treatment, or compliance with medication protocols, patients can escalate into psychosis, with behaviors and verbal communication that is disjointed, incoherent and on multiple levels of cognition or awareness. During this phase, patients can understand instructions but may not be able to comply or signal (verbally) to the observer that they understand these directions. Thus the observer may misinterpret, especially if inexperienced, these mannerisms. In fact, the observer may feel threatened by the apparent lack of cooperation, when in fact the patient can at levels, understand and be attempting to work with the observer.

If I ever have another manic or psychotic episode, I overwhelmingly hope that my CRNP will be called and asked to help me through these types of challenging periods. I can absolutely state that my compliance, acceptance of my condition, acceptance of assistance, acceptance of medication, education of my condition, acceptance and quality of psychotherapy are directly related to the quality of care, education, experience, tact, understanding and empathy of my nurse practitioner. In fact, prior to working with this NP, I had a very negative experience and opinion of the mental health system especially of MDs who seemed to be highly educated transparent phonies.

has developed and shared her approach to patients (and not because it is a "style" but because she believes in it whole heartedly, deep within her core) that of providing them two of the most important things they require (in addition to proper medical management), 1) dignity – the whole process of illness, erroneous behavior, lack of self control, low self esteem from the medical condition – strips the patient of dignity, 2) respect- the same processes and the stigma of illness, strip the patient of self and interpersonal respect. In the normal person, being treated with these entities are self evident. To the mental patient, these factors are enormous.

I can not overstate, that the quality of my progress and program is directly related to the experience and medical expertise of NP over the past three and a half years.

As a former patient, I was also a witness. One day while I was a patient in a hospital in the Pacific Northwest, a rail thin young woman with severe acne came timidly out of her room to join us in the commons area. She had an oil complexion and it was obvious that she was in a hyper metabolic state if there is such a word. She looked like a deer at night in bright car headlights.

Her doctor was very upset with her. Apparently she was reluctant to come out of her room and he was getting tough with her. He called her an isolationist and had told the judge on her case this, and just to be firm with her. We were all a bit in shock with his attitude.

After the doctor had left, the young woman was visibly upset and crying. The nurses came over to reassure her and basically took her under their angelic wings to sooth and calm her. Their priorities were totally holistic and they took care of the woman over the next few hours calming her down, introducing the rest of us to her (without force or pushing us on her) and generally making her feel comfortable and welcome. They showed her how to take care of her complexion and basic health needs. You could see the transformation come over her as she relaxed and the tension melted away into a big puddle on the hospital floor as the nurses worked with her.

Later that day, we had a patient that was very very upset in her room. She was very vocal and yelling about many things including the restraints that she was in. The nurses, with the utmost of calm and patience, talked to her, got her calmed down, explained the purpose of the restraints and how if she worked with them, they would be more than willing to remove them (and that they disliked them as much as she did). The honesty worked and she calmed down. Later she joined us in the common area, without restraints and cooperative with the staff and other patients.

In my experiences with various doctors, they are proficient at being clinically correct. They can diagnose, medicate and understand the technical metabolic and pharmacologic problems that a patient may have. I have actually met a couple that had bedside manners that understood how to work with patients rather than believe in being technically correct. In my experience, it has been nurses and nurse practitioners that have the inner security and common sense, to be flexible and work with patients. There is an old saying that still is true- one can bring out the worst in a person or the best, and my nurse practitioner definitely brings out the best in a person.

After you are hospitalized, you have very little to live for. Your reputation, self expectations, self esteem and respect, are at the lowest of order. Nurse practitioners understand this. You live for the nurses and for the nurse practitioner you work with. Rather than attempting to tackle big mountains, they train you to walk again, one step at a time, rebuilding your life. And, they are not so pretentious that they are unwilling to get down at your level and walk along side you so to speak, as you do so. They are your mentors, your guide, your friend, your confidante, your barometer of hope. They are intuitive and feeling, rather than being technical and clinically sanitary (which they keep to themselves). They are effective, because they have not forgotten that within each

patient, is a human being that wants to be treated as just that- a human being, not a thing, not a number, not a patient. Nurses and nurse practitioners do not treat patients as patients. They are not condescending. They share the office with you so to speak and their time. They invest in you. You are as important as any other patient, person, neighbor or friend. To say that we have confidence in them, in their abilities medically and philosophically, is an understatement, for improvement is an act of faith.

People assume, incorrectly.....that getting well is automatic. It is not. Normally, all one would do is sit in a hospital with the realization that life was over. Your relationship with your friends and family are over. Your colleagues – why would they want to have trust in you etc etc etc. Most of us prefer the hospital where we don't have to hide, we can deal with others like ourselves, and we have nurses and nurse practitioners who understand our needs. Such is not the case- we have to go back out into the real world, who are afraid of us and much as we are afraid of them. We “borrow” courage from our nurse practitioner. We “borrow” faith, from our nurse practitioner. We “borrow” hope from our nurse practitioner for in fact, we are going out into the unknown- we may as well be stepping off onto the surface of Mars- we are going into new territory in juggling our conditions and the altered changes of society (as they view us). It is a challenging and unspoken time, unspoken except for the literal colleague ofour nurse practitioner. We live for them. We improve for them. We work for them. We rebuild for them. It is a significant as teaching the blind to read Braille, or the amputee to walk and later being able to explore nature with his son on a hike.

Unfortunately, society doesn't care what we think. We are only patients. We are disqualified because we are patients. We can't be objective. We can't be trusted. In fact, we are the consumers and we are saying what is effective. I have nurse practitioner that, if I were in trouble, would help me and stand by me, without question, unlike my family, unlike my friends, etc. She is my Coast Guard when I am on the open seas with a dingy in all types of weather. Do I rely on her? Absolutely. Do I trust her? I am a better human being because of her. Do I stay on course in treatment and medications because of her? She is my compass, and I stay the course in compliance regardless of how I feel about having to have medications. Do I trust her in medications and dosing? Absolutely. She screens me in blood chemistries and.....personal observations always. She is absolutely qualified as a practitioner.