


What are the components of medication management support?

Medication management support consists of brief, structured outpatient sessions conducted by a health care professional. The initial session starts by reviewing the medical evaluation results with the patient as well as the negative consequences from drinking. This information frames a discussion about the diagnosis of alcohol dependence, the recommendation for abstinence, and the rationale for medication. The clinician then provides information on the medication itself and adherence strategies, and encourages participation in a mutual support group such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). 

CLINICIAN SUPPORT MATERIALS

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Initial Session Template

Medication Management Support for Alcohol Dependence

This template outlines the first in a series of appointments designed to support patients diagnosed with alcohol dependence who are starting a course of medication to help them maintain abstinence.

Date: _____ Time spent: _____

Patient name: _____

Pertinent history: _____

Observations: _____

Before counseling:

Record from the patient's chart:


Alcohol-dependence medication prescribed:
 naltrexone PO XR-naltrexone injectable acamprosate disulfiram other: _____
dose and schedule: _____

Lab results and other patient information (fill in the left column of the chart below, to the degree possible)

Gather:

Patient information on the medication (available, for example, from www.medlineplus.gov)

Wallet emergency card for naltrexone or disulfiram (see www.niaaa.nih.gov/guide)

Listing of local mutual help groups. For AA, see www.aa.org; for other groups, see the Rethinking Drinking Web site at <http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/Help-links/> under "Information Resources." 


Patient information— from the chart or patient report, this forms the basis for counseling	Counseling— delivered in a nonjudgmental way, this enhances patient motivation and provides the rationale for medication
<p>6 Encourage participation in a mutual support group:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Provide list of local options and describe the benefits of attendance. Note that attending AA or another mutual support group is a way to acquire a network of friends who have found ways to live without alcohol. Tell the patient that medication is time limited and that the importance of mutual support groups increases when medications are stopped.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Address barriers to attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the patient is reluctant to attend: "Would you be willing to try just one meeting before our next session?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the patient has attended a meeting before and wasn't comfortable: "Not all groups are alike. It's likely that you'll need to try several before finding one that feels right." • If the patient is concerned about members disapproving of his or her medication: "The medication is a tool you'll use in an effort not to drink. It has been shown to help others stop drinking. Also, it's not addicting. And the official policy of AA supports people taking nonaddicting medicines prescribed by a doctor."

CLINICIAN SUPPORT MATERIALS

Referral Resources

When making referrals, involve your patient in the decisions and schedule a referral appointment while he or she is in your office.

Finding support groups

- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) offers free, widely available groups of  volunteers in recovery from alcohol dependence. Volunteers are often willing to work with professionals who refer patients. For contact information for your region, visit www.aa.org.

Local resources

Use the space below for contact information for resources in your area (treatment centers, mutual support groups such as AA, local government services, the closest Veterans Affairs medical center, shelters, churches).

PATIENT EDUCATION MATERIALS

Strategies for Cutting Down

Small changes can make a big difference in reducing your chances of having alcohol-related problems. Here are some strategies to try. Check off some to try the first week, and add some others the next.

Additional tips for quitting

If you want to quit drinking altogether, the last three strategies can help. In addition, you may wish to ask for support from people who might be willing to help, such as a significant other or nondrinking friends. Joining Alcoholics Anonymous or another mutual support group is a way to acquire a network of friends who have found ways to live without alcohol. If you're dependent on alcohol and decide to stop drinking completely, don't go it alone. Sudden withdrawal from heavy drinking can cause dangerous side effects such as seizures. See a doctor to plan a safe recovery.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About diagnosing and helping patients with alcohol use disorders

■ Should I recommend any particular behavioral therapy for patients with alcohol use disorders?

Several types of behavioral therapy are used to treat alcohol use disorders. Cognitive-behavioral therapy, motivational enhancement, and 12-step facilitation (e.g., the Minnesota Model) have all been shown to be effective.³⁶ A combination of approaches has been shown to be effective as well (see the next question). Getting help in itself appears to be more important than the particular approach used, provided it avoids heavy confrontation and incorporates the basic elements of empathy, motivational support, and an explicit focus on changing drinking behavior. For patients receiving medications for alcohol dependence, brief medical counseling sessions delivered by a nurse or physician have been shown to be effective without additional behavioral treatment by a specialist²² (see page 17).



In addition to more formal treatment approaches, mutual help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) appear to be very beneficial for people who stick with them. AA is widely available, free, and requires no commitment other than a desire to stop drinking. If you've never attended a meeting, consider doing so as an observer and supporter. To learn more, visit www.aa.org.

