

Abnormal Psychology

Chapter 13 Case Study - Riley

Riley is a 49 year-old father of four. He has recently been committed against his will into the local mental hospital for attempting to kill his wife and children. Apparently, last night, Riley heard his wife and daughters conspiring to poison him by placing rat poison in his eggs the following morning. He has known that he is in danger of being poisoned for quite some time (at least 8 or 9 months.) Through the use of an audiocapaceter (his word) that had been implanted into his back left molar during a visit to his dentist last month, he heard the plot unfold. Although this is not the first time he has heard people threatening to kill him, this was the only time he knew who they were. As a result, he planned to use a shot gun and kill his family while they slept before they could kill him.

About three in the morning, Riley slowly got out of bed so as to not awaken his wife. He went into the closet and found the shot gun. Luckily for the entire family, the shells had been removed from their usual place at the request of his psychiatrist (his wife moved them). This so enraged Riley, that he began to hit his wife in the head with the butt of the gun. Hysterical, his oldest daughter called 911. His wife and children all were able to get out of the house and over to a rather frightened next-door neighbor's home. Riley began to bang on the neighbor's door just as the police arrived to arrest him.

Prior to his arrest, Riley has been on antipsychotic medications for at least eight months. Unbeknownst to his family, he stopped taking them about two weeks ago. He stated that he stopped because they made him "very, very sleepy" and caused him to "shake all over." Riley also has severe diabetes and extremely high blood pressure. Last week, he lost his job at the local grocery store where he has stocked groceries since he was in his late teens. Apparently, he got into an altercation with the store manager. Riley tried to protect himself when he perceived that the manager was attempting to tie him up in the store room. In reality, the manager attempted to restrain Riley after he slugged a box boy that had offered him a piece of gum.

Riley has no history of psychosis prior to this episode that began about 9 months ago. Since that time, his symptoms have been present nearly every day. Further, his oldest brother and father have serious depression, yet there is no evidence of schizophrenia in his family. One of his daughters did, however, attempt suicide several years ago (when she was 15) after her boyfriend broke up with her.

Please answer the following questions:

1. Based on what you have learned in this class so far, which diagnosis might you explore when working with Riley?
2. For your diagnosis list the symptoms and circumstances from the case study that you would use as evidence for these diagnoses.
3. Based on the treatments you have learned about so far, what would you recommend and possible intervention to treat Riley?