This issue of Psychiatric Annals, guest edited by Dr. Theodore A. Stern, the Chief of the Psychiatric Consultation Service at Massachusetts General Hospital, is definitely a “keeper.”

The first article, “Catastrophic Drug-Drug Interactions in Psychopharmacology,” by Drs. Andrew D. Carlo and Jonathan E. Alpert focuses on the principal mechanisms of drug interactions and on potentially serious and life-threatening interactions that, although rare, are more common with certain medication combinations, and therefore can be anticipated if not prevented in certain cases.

The second article, “Clinically Relevant Complications of Drug-Food Interactions in Psychopharmacology,” also by Drs. Carlo and Alpert discusses drug-food interactions when it comes to the physical, chemical, and pathophysiologic relationships between drugs and nutrients, food in general, or nutritional status. An interaction is considered to be clinically significant if it alters a therapeutic drug response, resulting in a reduction of efficacy or the increase in the adverse effects of the drug. These interactions can occur via multiple mechanisms, specifically alterations in (1) pharmacokinetics (involving absorption, distribution, metabolism, and excretion); (2) pharmacodynamics (involving interactions at the receptor level that lead to changes in the clinical effects of the drug or the physiologic effect of a nutrient); or (3) sporadically occurring interactions such as “idiosyncratic” in the absence of definitive information about their underlying mechanisms.

As a clinician in the field of psychiatry, you will want to keep these articles as close references for your practice, in which we learn that although medication reactions are unpredictable, they are more likely to occur with certain drug to drug interactions and drug to food combinations.

The next article, “Idiosyncratic Adverse Reactions to Psychotropic Medications,” by Drs. Jonathan R. Stevens, Joshua J. Rodgers, and Stern identifies specific idiosyncratic adverse episodes in the clinical setting.

The final article, “Catastrophic Complications Related to Psychopharmacologic Drug Withdrawal,” by Drs. James Jenkins and Sean Glass describes symptoms and issues related to medication withdrawal.

Medical interactions occur commonly; most are not serious, but some are catastrophic and require expert recognition and management.

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