come for the patient. From the broadest perspective, these projects can be viewed as helping the family to understand the patient’s illness, recognize the distinction between the person and the disease, and respond appropriately to the patient’s disability and care needs. In short, they help families define themselves as caregivers and become effective in that role. Available evidence suggests that this approach can have positive effects; results of a major study investigating interactions between family treatment and medications are pending (Schooler & Siris, 1987).

Extending this to depression, it may be therapeutic for clinicians to work with the family, to teach them about the nature of the illness and the associated disability, and to define a caregiving role. This may, for example, help family members understand and cope with losses in reciprocity and to maintain positive (though modified) relationships with the patient. However, the nature of depression makes the situation more complex than with other disorders. As discussed in cognitive-behavioral models (e.g., Beck, 1967), patients with depression may underestimate and underutilize their capabilities — a tendency that may be exacerbated by explicitly defining the patient as disabled and in need of family care. Thus, using a “caregiving” perspective borrowed directly from work on dementia and physical illness may be countertherapeutic when applied to depression. Hence, for patients such as those in the study of Hinrichsen and colleagues, the caregiving process needs further definition before this approach can be used in clinical practice.

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References


Erratum

We regret that a typographical error altered the meaning of the last stanza of James Birren’s poem, which appeared in the June 1992 issue on page 326. A corrected version is printed in its entirety below.

Time is the Messenger

Time is the messenger of the Gods,
Who travels without restraint
Through matter, minds, and space.

To all in these domains
Directives must be sent
By swift and trusted messenger.

Gods cause effects and bring about order
And give to Time alone
Messages for delivery to —
Shells and cells,
Molecules and mountains,
Gasses and galaxies.

Matter, minds, and space behave
According to godly laws,
Primal orders are trusted to Time alone.

If you sense or see speeding Time
And can read his dispatches,
You may understand why things were and are,
And what will be.

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