

Yes, We Have No Bananas

Christian G. Wolff, M.D.

Monday

PK is a 12-year-old girl whose grades have taken a nosedive since her parents separated 6 months ago. I sent her and her mother to a counselor for cognitive therapy and have had reports of significant improvement. To the contrary, Mom tells me today that PK continues to distance herself from her friends and has been continuously tearful and sad. After talking it over with PK and her mother, we will try her on an antidepressant. Seeing the effect of marital discord on such a previously vivacious child really tears me up.

Tuesday

Speaking of mothers and daughters, MR is a new patient that came to see me at the urging of her 2 adult daughters who are both patients of mine. Since I have successfully treated both of them for depression, they figured that Mom could use a little serotonin boost of her own. After speaking with MR, I agreed. Well, to my consternation, MR has been taking medication for 3 weeks and has the gall not to feel much better! I'm hoping a dosage adjustment might salvage my credibility here.

Wednesday

GF's chart notes that her visit today is for a sore throat. Ha! I should have known better, especially after GF greeted me with such forced speech it almost knocked me off my feet. By the way, she says, she elected to drop her lithium. It just made her shake and thirsty and "feel dull." Since then, she continues, she is suspicious that her husband has a consort (her word) and has decided to pursue her own. Additionally, sleeping only 2 hours nightly appears to have fueled her paranoia. I convinced her to take some olanzapine to sleep a little better and feel more "even" until she can make a follow-up appointment with her psychiatrist. She complied. For now, at least.

Thursday

Mothers and daughters seem like a theme this week, which is interesting since it is the week before Father's Day. This pair really concerns me—DM is only 10 years old but has a chart thickness rivaling a Medicare veteran. She has, I note, most recently been diagnosed with a rare seizure disorder. Now Mom is concerned because DM had a single episode of chest pain while playing soccer in the yard. Despite my reassurances, she is convinced of some congenital heart defect. (I am "just a family doctor, of course.") After I had them confer with our referral coordinator to schedule a visit to a pediatric cardiologist, her husband slipped back to my office. "She spends hours on the Internet finding things wrong with our child," he says.

Later that day I gave all my partners and all her specialists (GI, neurology, and now cardiology) a heads-up about his concern. I'm not ready to decide that this is a case of Munchausen by proxy—but I sure am looking for it.

Friday

© FD is an irascible codger who gets along much better with his neighbors in his retirement village since he began taking sertraline. He really capped off my week when he commented, "I may have my blood pressure under control, but I ain't buying any green bananas. I'm not feeling so good that I'm sure I'll be around to eat them ripe."

Bananas indeed.

Editor's note: Dr. Wolff is a board-certified family physician in private practice in Cornelius, North Carolina. He finished his family practice residency in 1997. He has graciously consented to share stories from the trenches of primary care. While his practice diary is taken from actual patient encounters, the reader should be aware that some medication references may represent off-label uses. We at the *Companion* are certain that these vignettes will inform, entertain, challenge, and stimulate our readers in their effort to address behavioral issues in the everyday practice of medicine.

Plans Postgraduate Press, Inc.
al copy may be printed