Identifying and understanding mental illness has always been a big challenge in the medical community. At times, you may feel frustrated, confused, and even upset. Diagnosis is the first step in finding a resolution and treatment plan that can help you to return to a normal and active life. In this topic, we will focus on how your diagnosis is made and the concepts behind formulating a diagnosis and treatment plan.

**DEFINITIONS:**

- **Disease:** A disease is an abnormal condition that affects the body. It is often associated with specific symptoms or signs. These symptoms or signs are features of a disease. They themselves are not the disease. For example, a headache is a symptom, not a disease. Headache can be seen in many illnesses.
- **Symptoms:** Symptoms are subjective. They are things a patient feels or in other words, their complaints. For example, “I am sad”, “I am having a headache”.
- **Signs:** Signs are objective. They are features that can be observed such as a shaky hand or dilated pupil.

When the process of diagnosis begins, you will be treated to a comprehensive diagnostic interview and examination with a medical team to understand your chief complaint. This assessment includes the following elements:

- **History taking and review of systems to understand the nature and extent of presenting issues.**
- **Use of Assessment Scale and questionnaire.**
- **Physical and mental status examination to understand associated signs and features of the presenting illness.**
- **Review of Lab and other tests.**

After this assessment, the physician or trained mental health expert uses either of the two important Psychiatric diseases classification tools (DSM or ICD) to come to a diagnosis.

- **Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (D.S.M) - The DSM was developed by the American Psychiatric Association and is widely used in America. It is an exclusive tool used for mental health disease classification.**
- **International Classification of Diseases (I.C.D) - The ICD was developed by the world health organization (W.H.O). This classification system includes diagnosis for all the systems in the human body and is not just restricted to mental health illnesses. Panels of both researchers and clinicians constantly update both ICD as well as DSM.**

**IMPORTANCE OF TREATMENT:**

Forming and moving forward with a treatment plan is the most important element. A psychiatric treatment plan does not just address your problems or issues, but is a comprehensive plan to address the overall issues you are facing with a goal to improve your quality of life.
For example, if you were dealing with a Major Depressive disorder related to other psychosocial and environmental problems such as loss of a loved one, or addiction issues along with other medical problems, a treatment plan would address all health related issues to improve your overall quality of life.

REFERENCES:

DSM psychiatry.org.

Mental health What’s normal, what’s not - MayoClinic.com