CHAPTER 2

DELIRIUM, DEMENTIA AND AMNESTIC DISORDERS

Case illustration of “Mike”

Introduction to the Video Interview

Amnestic Disorder

This client interview illustrates someone who is diagnosed with Amnestic Disorder Due to a General Medical Condition. The most common medical conditions are a variety of brain traumas and this client suffered a brain injury as a result of an auto accident. Mike talks about how he copes with his memory loss and describes his struggles to remember previously learned information. Notice the number of losses Mike has experienced since his accident and his odd pattern of speech in the interview.

Amnestic Disorder Due to a General Medical Condition

Amnestic Disorder Due to a General Medical Condition is characterized by disturbance in memory and impaired ability to learn new information or recall previously learned information. The memory disturbance:

- Causes significant impairment in social or occupational functioning;
- Is a direct consequence of a general medical condition; and
- Includes specifiers that can be transient or, as in this case illustration, chronic.

Interview Questions:

1. In this video, the practitioner comments, “…so it’s your memory for things like a shopping list, it’s been most effective.” Evaluate how Mike’s memory has been affected.

2. The practitioner observes, “I remember that you tried to go back to work in an auto shop after the accident. Can you talk about that and what happened?” Describe the extent of disruption Mike experienced in his life compared to his prior level of social functioning.

3. In this interview, the practitioner remarks, “…and when you first came in, do you remember the problems you were having when you came into the hospital?” Describe Mike’s perception of what happened in his life as he struggled with his
memory, the extent of social disruption he experienced since his accident, and his emotional reactions.

Practitioner Reflections:

The video of “Mike” in the DVD accompanying the book, *Psychopathology: A Competency-based Assessment Model for Social Workers*, illustrates someone with a diagnosis of Amnestic Disorder Due to a General Medical Condition.

1. The competency-based assessment focuses on strengths and coping capacities in the client’s environment. Describe the interactions of the biological, psychological and social factors in Mike’s life. When formulating your assessment, what areas of competence did he demonstrate in the interview?

   - What internal and external strengths do you see in Mike’s situation?
   - What more would you like to know about Mike’s support system?
   - If you were the social worker assigned to Mike’s case, what steps would you take to assure that his support system stays intact?
   - What would you consider adding to Mike’s support system?

2. In the interview with the practitioner, Mike talks about feeling guilty for the accident that resulted in his memory disturbance. He adds that he felt depressed when he tried to go back to work and was assigned “janitorial” duties. Describe the influence of cultural beliefs on Mike’s self-concept and his diminished abilities.

3. Reflect for a moment on how Mike is currently functioning. If you were the social worker assigned to his case, are there any consultations you would like to arrange? Are there any other resources that you would want to involve?

4. If you had the opportunity to interview Mike’s current girlfriend, described as his “new brain”, what questions would you want to ask her?