# Specialist Module with Workshop: Psychopharmacology

## Prof. Sergio Astori

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

Knowledge and understanding

Students will be taught both the beneficial and potentially harmful effects of psychotropic drugs, essential knowledge for anyone intending to deal with the treatment of mental suffering.

Students training now to perform clinical psychological actions in the future, will be helped to understand the symbolic aspects of using - and the risk of abusing - psychotropic drugs.

The psychopharmacological prescription will be studied within its natural context, namely the therapeutic relationship. The expectations and fears that pharmacological action induces within the family and in other health figures (e.g. other specialists) and social figures (mapping the public and private offering of prevention and treatment) will also be explored.

Ability to apply knowledge and understanding

At the end of the course, students will be able to distinguish the most commonly used classes of psychotropic drugs.

Furthermore, they will be able to recognise the limits of treatments with psychotropic substances from the distant and recent past in order to be able to plan a "thought-out" clinical use of the substances, which includes the prescription's personalisation and its integration into the offering of comprehensive patient care.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Reference will be made to:

1. The use of psychotropic substances: from the use of herbs (administered in the past but also back in vogue today) to the “fruits” of modern chemicals.

2. Psychopharmacological drugs currently in use and ideas for future therapeutic uses. The advent of molecular biology, genetics and psycho-neuro-immuno-endocrinological evidence.

3. The communication with patients, the purposes of drug prescription, combining psychopharmacological drugs with psychotherapy.

4. The use and abuse of psychoactive substances, effects versus risks, special circumstances for prescribing/administering (e.g. children, pregnancy, the elderly, the mentally retarded and cases of non-awareness of illness).

5. Interdisciplinary and ethical aspects linked with chemical and para-chemical action (i.e. “the further effect” compared to purely biological action) of psychopharmacological drugs.

***READING LIST***

S. Astori, *Effetti desiderati*. *Parole*, *psicofarmaci e relazioni quando l’anima fa male*. Edizioni San Paolo, 2018 (other materials - articles and updated literature - will be suggested and shared online with the participants in the workshop).

***TEACHING METHOD***

Teaching will be based on: written and video material, discussions and simulations, meetings with experts (direct testimonies by people working in the mental health sector and family members of people undergoing pharmacological treatment).

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Continuous assessment of what students have learnt and their ongoing involvement in lectures with final oral assessment. The first lecture will look at students’ expectations and the final lecture will be an open discussion between the lecturer and students on the topics that have been studied and the results of the work carried out together. The final grade is unique and is expressed by the options APPROVED or NOT APPROVED.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

No specific knowledge is required.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG, or on the Faculty notice board.