

Val Verde Regional Medical Center Heritage Program Dr. Linessa Vega

Dr. Linessa Vega loves what she does. She had every intention of becoming a Pediatrician but , while doing a psychiatric rotation in medical school, she became intrigued with psychiatry. “There are so many issues involved in psychiatry,” she says, “there are social issues, history, medical and genetic issues all at work when there is a mental illness.” She quickly realized psychiatry was her field.

She focuses on developing a rapport with each patient. Helping them to figure out exactly what they hope to get out of treatment. She helps them choose realistic goals and then develops an individualized treatment plan to help them reach the goals. She gives them hope and realistic steps to help boost confidence. She also assists patients with connecting to the community resources they need. “Resources are often limited and navigating the healthcare system can be very complicated,” she says, “I try to help connect a patient and their support system with what they need to succeed.”

Families (or whatever support system a patient chooses) are an important part of the psychiatric process. They can provide support and encouragement to the patient and they can learn together how to utilize coping and communication skills to help patients go into remission. “Remission is the goal for every patient,” says Vega.

At first, Dr. Vega was a bit skeptical about psychiatry using telemedicine. In telemedicine, the patient sits in front of a screen as does the doctor. They can see and hear one another. It is kind of like skype or face time. It is a valuable tool for rural communities where services are either not available or limited. “For the kids,” says Vega, “it is easy. Because of social media they feel comfortable with telemedicine. For adults it takes a little time to get used to. But because we have a support staff with a physical, involved presence for the patient, it works. I haven’t had a patient stop yet because of the telemedicine.” Val Verde Regional Medical Center has a highly qualified psychiatric support staff who work closely with Dr. Vega and each patient. The goal all around is to provide people with what they need to succeed in their healing process. “The staff at VVRMC is willing to go the extra mile,” says Vega, “They are very supportive and kind.”

One of the major roadblocks to psychiatry is the general taboo associated with mental health issues. When diagnosed with cancer or heart disease, no one feels like they are weak. A mental health diagnosis can come with guilt and shame. People may feel they have caused their own illness. This is not the case. Community education is very important. “People need to understand mental illness is just like any other kind of illness. A psychiatrist is just like any other doctor who has a specialty. We are all here to help people get better.” Val Verde Regional Medical Center’s Heritage Program employees are frequently seen at community events passing out information and helping to eradicate the taboo through education.

If you would like to see Dr. Vega, you can just call or ask your Primary Care Physician to refer you. Either way, reaching out for help is the first step to getting better. For more information call 830-282-0855.