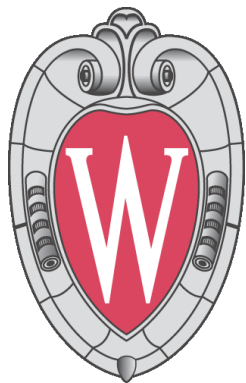


# Medical Causes of Psychiatric Problems

Wisconsin Public Psychiatry Network  
Mental Health Teleconference

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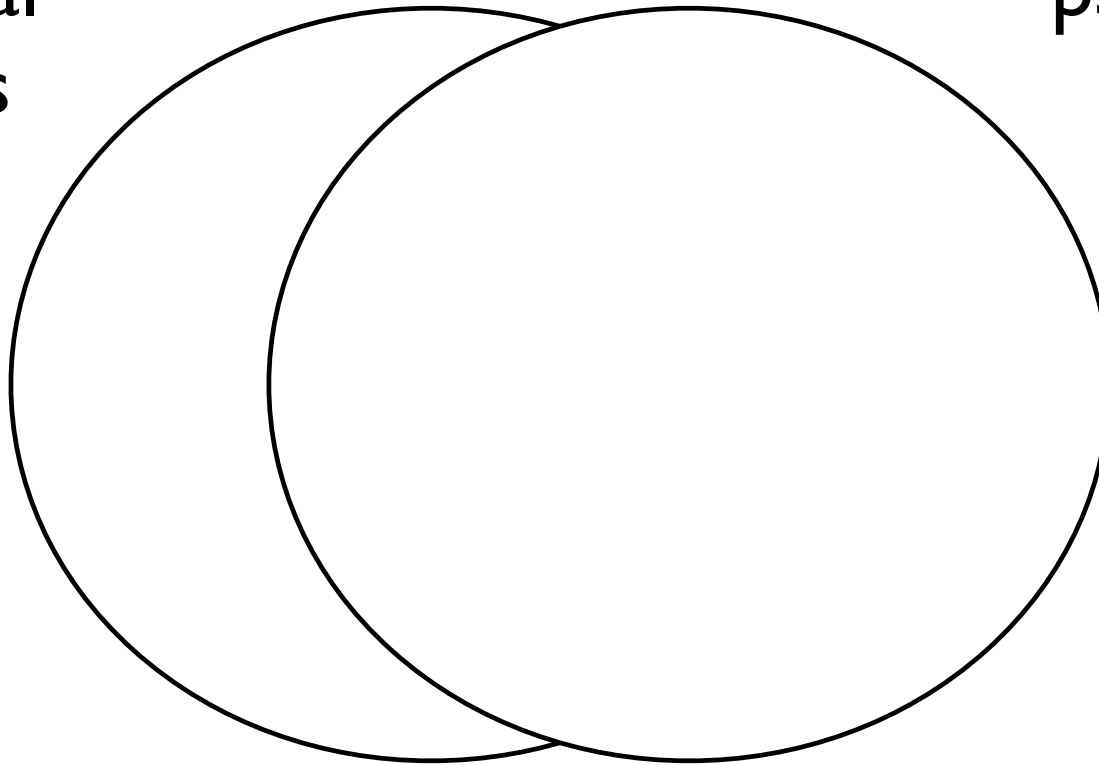
# Outline

- background: the overlap between medical & mental illness
- common medical disorders in various populations
- medical causes of psychiatric conditions
- medications and medical illness
- when to suspect medical illness

# Comorbidity

medical  
illness

psychiatric  
illness



# Descartes' brain

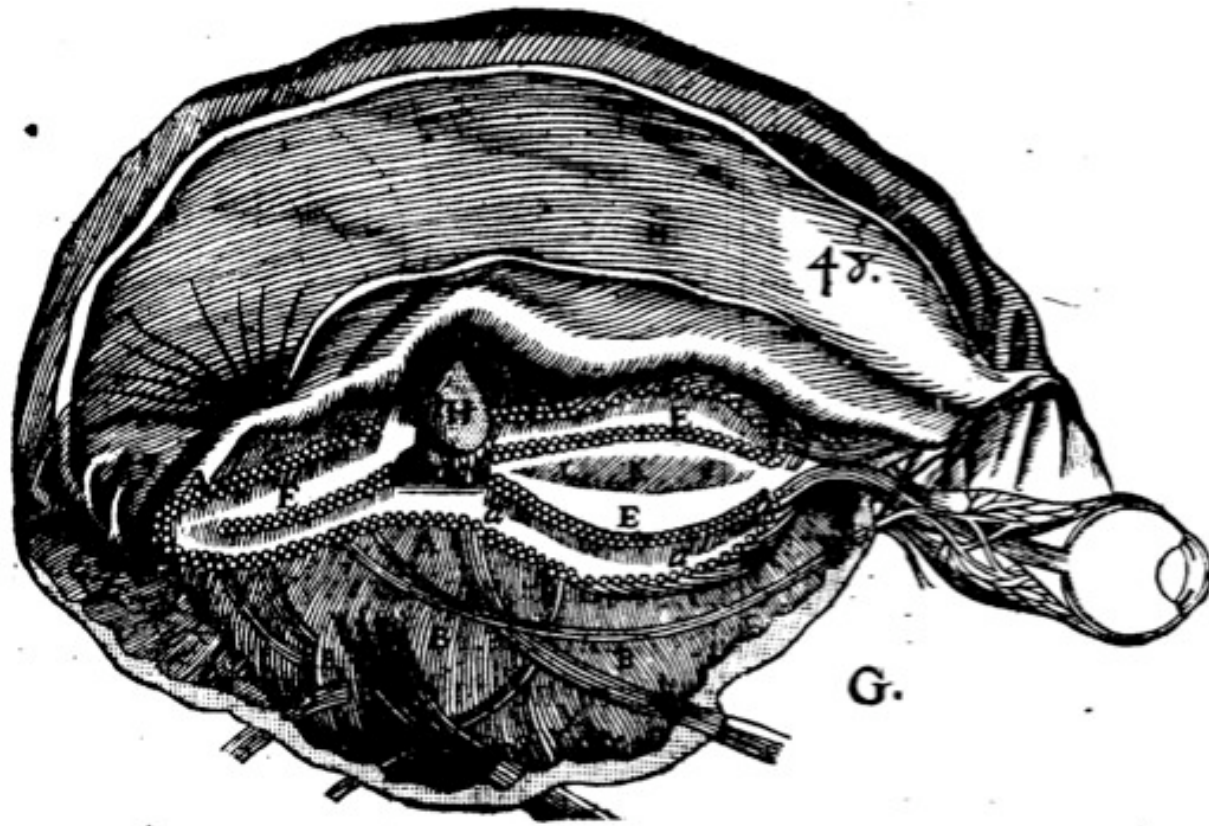


Illustration from Descartes' *Treatise of Man* (1664), where H is the pineal gland, thought to be intersection between mind and body.

# A biopsychosocial perspective

- psychiatric symptoms arise in the context of:
  - biological risk factors
  - developmental risk factors
  - personality structure
  - psychosocial stressors
  - **current medical problems**

# Medical conditions: youth

- 15-18% of U.S. children have a chronic health condition, e.g.,
  - asthma, diabetes, cerebral palsy, cancer, epilepsy, traumatic brain injury, obesity
- children are also susceptible to acute illnesses, esp.,
  - infections
  - injuries

# Medical conditions: adult

- epilepsy
- traumatic brain injury
- spinal cord injury
- HIV/AIDS
- hepatitis B/C
- tuberculosis
- cancer
- chronic liver or kidney disease
- metabolic syndrome: obesity, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes

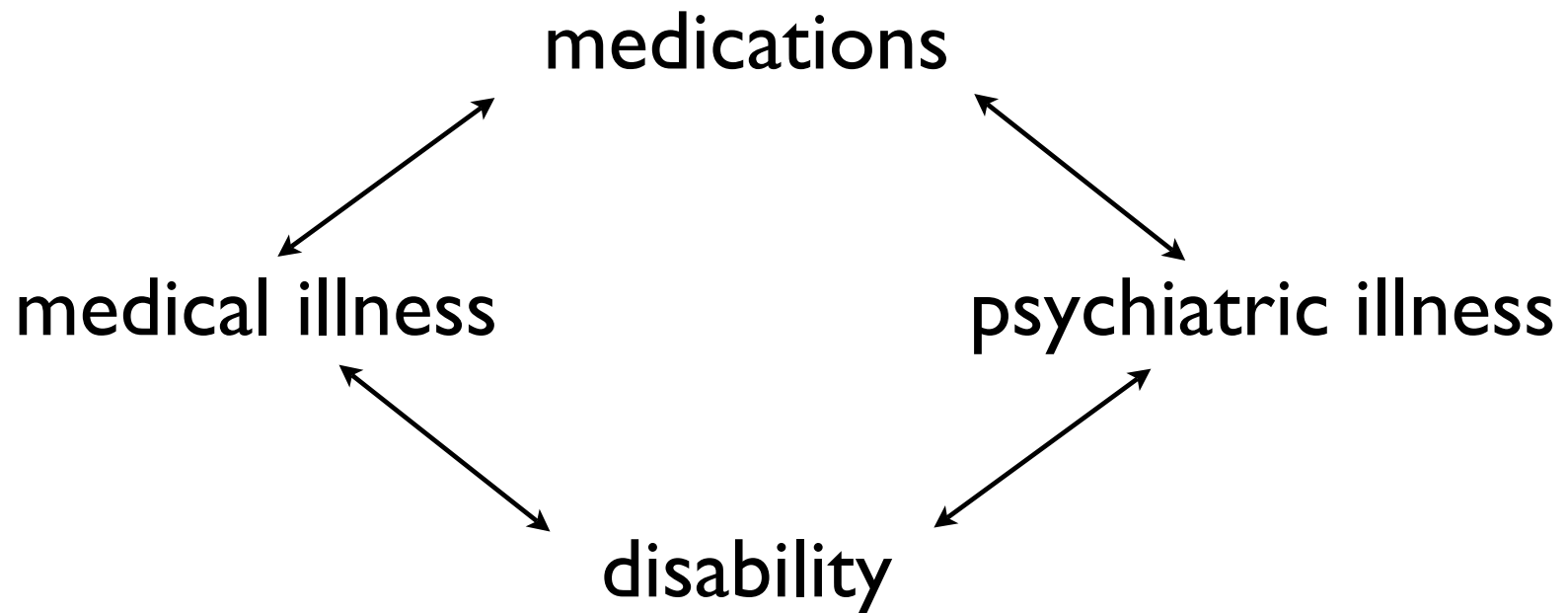
# Medical conditions: late life

- ischemic heart disease (heart attack)
- cerebrovascular disease (stroke)
- cancer
- arthritis
- high blood pressure
- diabetes
- COPD (emphysema, chronic bronchitis)
- Alzheimer's disease
- Parkinson's disease

# Special populations

- **prison:** TB, high blood pressure, asthma, low back pain, hepatitis
- **nursing home:** dementia, chronic pain, infection, pressure ulcers, fractures, UTI
- **homeless:** HIV, TB, hepatitis, poor nutrition, alcohol-related disorders, poor oral care

# Medical-psychiatric interactions



# Medical causes of depression

- endocrine: hypothyroidism
- degenerative: Alzheimer's, Parkinson's
- cancer
- vascular: stroke, heart attack
- traumatic brain injury
- epilepsy
- chronic pain
- toxic: alcohol, illicit substances, heavy metals, carbon monoxide, medications

# Medical causes of mania

- endocrine: hyperthyroidism
- vascular: stroke
- infection: syphilis
- traumatic brain injury
- autoimmune: multiple sclerosis
- toxic: illicit substances, medications

# Medical causes of psychosis

- endocrine: hyperthyroidism
- degenerative: Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, dementia with Lewy bodies
- vascular: stroke
- vision loss: macular degeneration
- traumatic brain injury
- epilepsy
- infection: syphilis
- toxic: alcohol, illicit substances, medications

# Medical causes of panic attacks

- endocrine: hypoglycemia, hyperthyroidism
- cardiac: arrhythmia (irregular heart beat)
- vascular: transient ischemic attack (TIA)
- toxic: alcohol withdrawal, illicit substances, medications

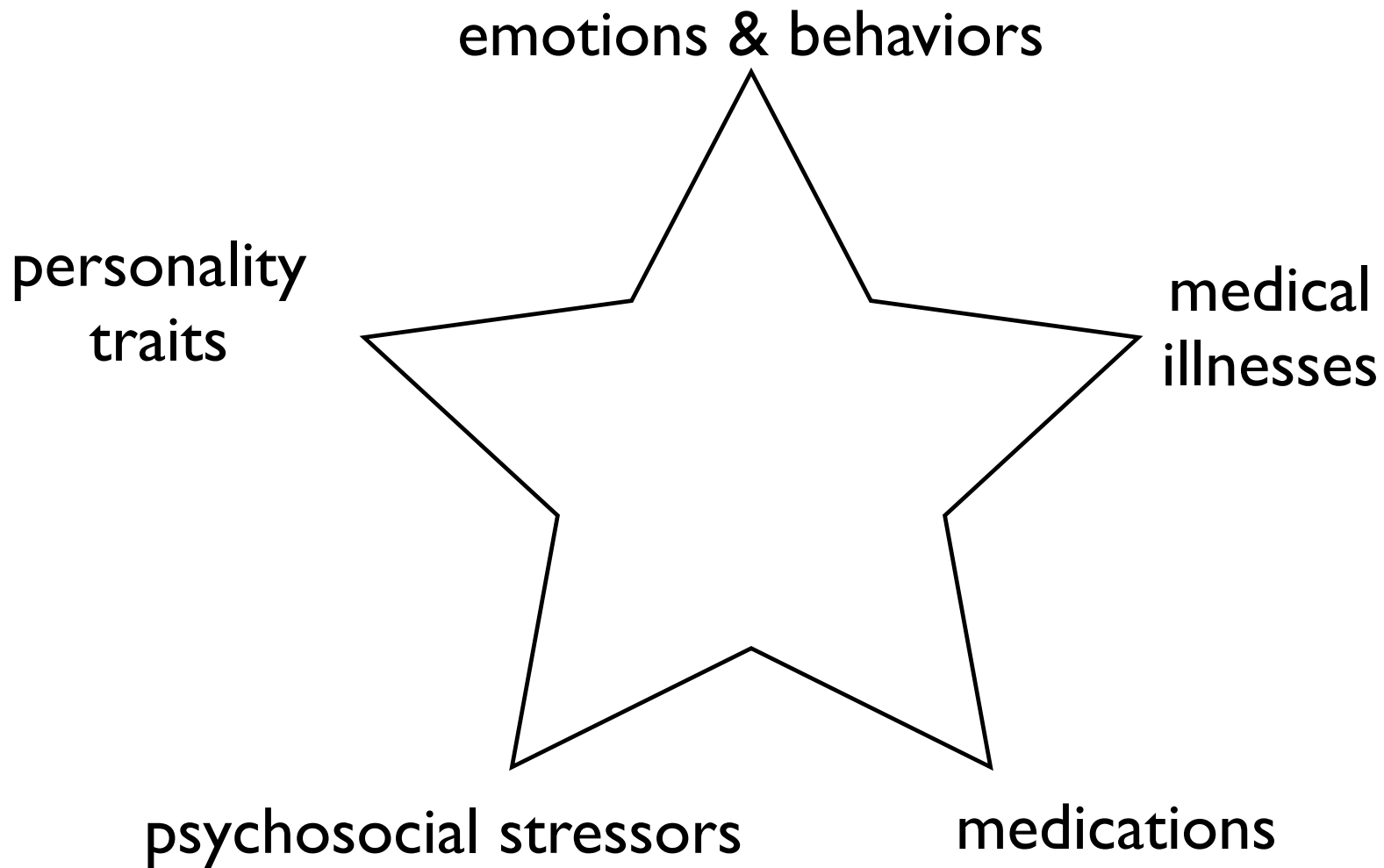
# Psychiatric side effects of medications

- steroids: depression, mania, psychosis, anxiety, agitation, confusion
- antibiotics: mania, hallucinations
- antiparkinsonian meds: psychosis
- antihypertensives: depression

# Medical side effects of psychotropic meds

- newer antipsychotics: weight gain, high cholesterol, high blood sugar
- older antipsychotics: movement disorders
- antidepressants: weight gain
- anti-anxiety medications: memory loss, falls

# Star method



# When to suspect medical illness

- any recent medication changes?
- any new physical symptoms?
- sudden onset of psychiatric symptoms?
- “atypical” psychiatric symptoms?
- confusion or change in alertness or orientation?

# Conclusions

- Many clients with mental illness also have significant medical problems, and vice versa.
- Mental health providers should keep in mind the medical problems and how they might contribute to mental illness.
- Clients should have access to routine and high-quality medical care that is coordinated with their mental health care.