Early Warning Signs of Psychotic Disorders and the Importance of Early Intervention

Margaret Migliorati, MA, LPCC
The University of New Mexico
mmigliorati@salud.unm.edu
Mental Health As a Public Health Issue and The Case for Early Intervention
The Take Home Message

• Finding Young People with Mental Health Issues Early and Treating Them is Also “Prevention”

• It Works!

• And ....It Saves Money!
Mental Illness Starts Early

- Half of all lifetime cases of mental illness start by age 14
- Three fourths start by age 24
Mental Health Problems Start Early

Anxiety Disorders 6 years old

Behavior Disorders 11 years old

Mood Disorders 13 years old

Substance Use Disorders 15 years old
Many Adolescents Have a Mental Illness

• 22% of adolescents have a severe mental health problem at some point during their adolescence

Merikangas, K et al, JAACAP, 49:10, 980-989, Oct 2010
• Fewer than 1 in 4 children with a Mental Disorder has ever received treatment
Mental Health is a Major Public Health Issue

- The World Health Organization predicts that mental disorders will be the leading cause of disability in the world by 2020
Why Focus on Psychotic Disorders?
Why Focus on Psychosis

- 3 out of 100 people will experience a psychotic episode in their lifetime

- Onset is generally in late adolescence or early adulthood

- Psychosis can have multiple causes and occur in multiple disorders including Bipolar Disorder, Severe Depression, Schizophrenia, PTSD, Autism, etc.
Why focus on Psychosis: Long-Term Course of Schizophrenia

- 1% prevalence of schizophrenia
- 1/3 of all mental health care spending in the U.S. on schizophrenia treatment
- People with schizophrenia take up 25% of the nation’s hospital beds
- 10% of people with schizophrenia commit suicide
- Indirect costs of schizophrenia high: loss of work, time and money spent by caregivers, law enforcement costs, etc.
- World Health Organization rated schizophrenia 2nd most burdensome disease in world (15%), after cardiovascular disease (18%)
Why Focus on Psychosis

- Symptoms of psychosis are treatable and the shorter the duration of untreated psychosis, the better the outcomes;
  
  *However*

- the average duration of untreated psychosis in the US and Europe is 1-2 years;
  
  *Thus*

- it will take an active effort by all of us to learn the early warning signs of psychosis and to know what to ask when
Why Focus on Psychosis

Functioning as an Effect of Number of Psychotic Episodes
Why Focus on Psychosis

Effects of Multiple Relapses

Days to Remission

There is HOPE with early treatment for mental illness...

- Early detection makes a difference
- It is associated with
  - More rapid and complete recovery
  - Preserved brain functioning
  - Preserved psychosocial skills
  - Decreased need for intensive treatments
  - Preserved network of supports
“I feel certain that many incipient cases might be arrested before the efficient contact with reality is completely suspended.”

Harry Stack Sullivan, 1927
Understanding the Spectrum of Psychosis and Early Intervention
What is psychosis?

Any number of symptoms indicating a loss of contact with reality, including:

- Hallucinations: most often hearing voices or seeing visions
- Delusions: false beliefs or marked suspicions of others
- Associated features:
  - Neurocognitive impairment
  - Behavioral and emotional changes
  - Disordered speech
  - Sleep difficulties
Course of onset and illness

Typical Course of Psychotic Episode

- Positive Symptoms
- Negative Symptoms

Prodromal Episode: 1 week to 3 months
Acute Psychotic Episode: 2 to 5 weeks
Post Episode: 6 to 18 months

CNS Activity
Risk for relapse
(Medication started)
The Prodromal Phase

- Encompasses the period of early symptoms or changes in functioning that precede psychosis

- Symptoms generally arise gradually but are new and uncharacteristic of the person

- The person retains awareness that something is not normal and thus is more amenable to help

- It is only during this phase that prevention is possible
Spectrum of Risk for Psychosis

Prodromal Psychosis – Early Intervention

Drop in functioning and/or Withdrawal

Attenuated positive symptoms

Full psychosis - First Episode

Chronic symptoms

Increase in Risk and Potential Long-Term Disability
Signs of Early Psychosis

1. A significant deterioration in functioning
2. Withdrawal from family and friends
3. Changes in behaviors, thoughts and emotions
Signs of Early Psychosis

1. A significant deterioration in functioning
   - Unexplained decrease in work or school performance
   - Decreased concentration and motivation
   - Decrease in personal hygiene
   - Decrease in the ability to cope with life events and stressors
2. Withdrawal from family and friends

- Loss of interest in friends, extracurricular sports/hobbies
- Increasing sense of disconnection, alienation
- Family alienation, resentment, increasing hostility, paranoia
Signs of Early Psychosis
Continued

3. Changes in behavior, thoughts, and emotions such as:
   - Heightened perceptual sensitivity
   - Magical thinking
   - Unusual perceptual experiences (illusions, fleeting hallucinations)
   - Unusual fears (may have insight when questioned)
   - Disorganized or digressive speech
   - Uncharacteristic, peculiar behavior
   - Reduced emotional or social responsiveness (affect, verbal responsiveness)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spectrum of Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No symptoms</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Drop in school/work performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Avoidance of family/friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Loss of interest in hobbies, activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Drop in hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Decrease in motivation and/or concentration</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Marked changes in sleep or appetite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drop in functioning/Withdrawal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unfounded fears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strange/extreme new beliefs or behaviors</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Hearing vague sounds/voices/noises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seeing shadows/lights/apparitions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Changes in speech – difficult to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attenuated positive symptoms</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hallucinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Delusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disorganization/severe confusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full psychosis</strong></td>
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</table>
Early Psychosis Symptoms

“I started having paranoid feelings about a year ago. If I really think, things started to happen little by little, but they gradually got worse. I didn’t notice because I thought the way I felt was right. And my parents didn’t notice because it was so gradual.”

Boydell et al, Psych Rehab J, 2006;30:54-60
Clinical Tools to help Detect Early Psychosis Symptoms
PRIME Screen

- Recommended to be completed as an interview (not a self-report)
- For use in clinical practice
- Helps put words to difficult concepts
- Gives clinicians a tool to ask basic screening questions
- Can be incorporated into other MH screening procedures, e.g., intakes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Please answer all questions for past year.</th>
<th>Definitely Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Some what Agree</th>
<th>Definitely Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I think that I have felt that there are odd or unusual things going on that I can’t explain.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I think that I might be able to predict the future.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I may have felt that there could possibly be something interrupting or controlling my thoughts, feelings, or actions.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I have had the experience of doing something differently because of my superstitions.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I think that I may get confused at times whether something I experience or perceive may be real or may be just part of my imagination or dreams.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I have thought that it might be possible that other people can read my mind, or that I can read others’ minds.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I wonder if people may be planning to hurt me or even may be about to hurt me.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I believe that I have special natural or supernatural gifts beyond my talents and natural strengths.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I think I might feel like my mind is “playing tricks” on me.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I have had the experience of hearing faint or clear sounds of people or a person mumbling or talking when there is no one near me.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I think that I may hear my own thoughts being said out loud.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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PRIME Screen

Scoring

Positive Score:
- 2 or more items scored at a “6”
- OR
- 3 or more items scored at a “5”

Other Guidelines:
- For lower scores you may also want to prompt for duration and distress
UNM
Early Psychosis Programs
The EARLY Program

**Background**

- Part of a 6-site national replication treatment research project called EDIPPPP – Early Detection and Intervention for the Prevention of Psychosis Program

- Based on earlier studies conducted in the United Kingdom, Australia, Scandinavia and the United States

- Made possible due to identification of predictors for psychosis and newer atypical medications with fewer side effects
The EARLY Program

Key Components

- Outreach and Education
- Screening and Referral
- Treatment Components:
  - Multi-Family Groups
  - 24 hour Family Crisis Management
  - School/Employment Support
  - Occupational Therapy
  - Medication as necessary

• Study stopped enrolling in May 2010
UNM Early Psychosis Programs

- A consultation clinic for young people (generally middle to high school aged) from across the state who are experiencing early warning signs of psychosis.

- Young people will be seen for up to 3 sessions with our specially trained clinical team (Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Occupational Therapists and Psychotherapists) for evaluation and treatment recommendations.
Initial Results
Initial Research Results:
Psychosis prevention studies:
1 year rates for conversion to psychosis
Initial Research Results:
Overall Functioning:
Baseline and 12 months

N=94
“I would entreat professionals not to be devastated by our illness and transmit this hopeless attitude to us.

I urge them never to lose hope; for we will not strive if we believe the effort is futile.”

Esso Leete, who has had schizophrenia for 20 years
Contact Us:

EARLY Hours:
8:00 am – 5:00 pm  M-F

For More Information, call:
1-888-NM-EARLY (663-2759)

www.earlyprogram.org