SCHIZOPHRENIA Factsheet

February 2019

How is duration of untreated psychosis related to schizophrenia?

Duration of untreated psychosis (DUP) is generally determined as the time from the onset of psychotic symptoms to the initiation of treatment or first clinical presentation when a diagnosis of first-episode psychosis may be given. This diagnosis is distinct from first-episode schizophrenia, which requires a spectrum of symptoms to be present for a longer period of time. Longer DUP has been associated with poorer prognosis. As such, understanding the effects of DUP is particularly important because it is potentially modifiable.

What is the evidence for duration of untreated psychosis?

Moderate to high quality evidence indicates the presence of an obligatory dangerousness criterion for compulsory treatment of mental illness is associated with longer DUP.

Moderate to low quality evidence indicates emergency services and inpatient units are associated with a shorter DUP than community services pathways to care.

Moderate quality evidence finds people with schizophrenia or non-affective psychosis have a longer DUP (~28 weeks) than people with affective psychosis, regardless of age or sex.

Longer DUP was found in low-middle income countries than in high income countries, but there are no differences in the length of DUP between Black, Asian or White ethnic groups.

Moderate quality evidence suggests long-term, widespread educational campaigns covering multiple domains such as advertising, distribution of brochures, visits to GPs and schools, training seminars, and follow-up contact may reduce the length of DUP. A one-dimensional campaign approach, such as solely educating GPs, may not be as effective.

For more information see the technical table

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

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