

SCHIZOPHRENIA Factsheet

February 2022

What are negative symptoms of schizophrenia?

Pharmacological therapies alone may provide insufficient respite from the symptoms of schizophrenia. The negative symptoms of schizophrenia refer to an absence of normal functions. This may include (but is not limited to); blunted affect, which is a scarcity of facial expressions of emotion, reduced frequency and range of gestures and voice modulation, and restricted eye contact; alogia (poverty of speech); asociality (reduced social interaction); avolition (reduced motivation and often poor hygiene) and anhedonia, which is reduced experience of pleasure, often manifesting as scarcity of recreation, inability to experience closeness, and reduced interest in sexual activity.

Psychosocial therapies may provide a clinical adjunct to pharmacological therapy, and include cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), hallucination focused integrative treatment, acceptance and commitment therapy, experience focused counselling, family intervention, metacognitive training, mindfulness, social skills training, and supportive therapy.

What is the evidence for psychosocial treatments for negative symptoms?

Moderate to high quality evidence shows a small to medium-sized benefit of CBT for greater improvement in negative symptoms than treatment as usual. Moderate quality evidence finds skills training, occupational therapy, music therapy, and exercise also provided small to medium-sized benefits for negative symptoms when compared to treatment as usual. The factors associated with the most benefit were skill enhancement, behavioural activation, social engagement and neurocognitive factors.

For further information see the technical table

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

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NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) is one of the largest independent medical and clinical research institutes in Australia and an international leader in neurological research.

Diseases of the brain and nervous system pose the greatest health, economic and social burden of any disease group because they are chronic, debilitating and have no known cures.

Medical research is the cornerstone of efforts to advance the health and wellbeing of families and the community. Our dedicated scientists are focussed on transforming their research into significant and practical benefits for all patients.

While we hope you find this information useful, it is always important to discuss any questions about schizophrenia or its treatment with your doctor or other health care provider.