

Family Voice Bulletin – Issue 29 (Feb 1st /2022)

Summarized by KJ (Krystal-Jyl) Thomas, MSW, RSW

In this week's session, facilitators KJ Thomas, MSW, RSW and Jillian Crabbe, MSW, RSW were joined by psychiatrist Dr. Alexandra Baines, MD FRCPC, clinical lead of the Integrated Schizophrenia and Recovery Program at The Royal and assistant clinical professor at the University of Ottawa.

Psychosis is something that happens in the brain, leading thoughts to become disorganized or perceptions of the world to become misinterpreted. It can be difficult to process what is real and what is perceived, as well as express emotions. Psychosis can be accompanied by false beliefs or even hallucinations. One thing we've learned about psychosis is that it can happen to people with predisposed genetic properties who experience a combination of increased stressors like isolation, substance use, anxiety, sleep disruption, stress at school or work, personal conflicts, or trauma. While psychosis is a symptom of schizophrenia it is not the only cause of psychosis.

There are medications created specifically for the treatment and prevention of psychosis. These include medications in tablet form, injection, and oral medications. Often these medications are called *antipsychotics*. Overall, research shows there is lower risk of death and fewer episodes of psychosis with the use of antipsychotics. Still, there are side effects that are important to note. Some people may stop taking their medication due to side effects, or believing that they no longer need them. This can lead to poor results in mental health and make it challenging to restart medication. Speaking to a doctor is imperative before taking any medications. It's equally important to check in and talk about any changes.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a commonly recommended type of therapy for psychosis. It focuses on the links and influence our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors have on each other. Another psychosocial intervention is Cognitive Remediation Therapy, which aims to improve executive functions as well as memory and attention.

Other factors that can help someone living with psychosis or serious mental illness include supportive relationships with family and friends, employment, peer support, social skills training, and life skills training.

Resources

- Morrison, A.P. et al. Think You're Crazy? Think Again: A Resource Book for Cognitive Therapy for Psychosis. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Freeman, D. et al. Overcoming Paranoid and Suspicious Thoughts, 2nd Edition. London: Robinson, 2021.
- Hayward, M. et al. Overcoming Distressing Voices, 2nd Edition. London: Robinson, 2018.
- Turkington, D. et al. Back to Life, Back to Normality. New York: The Cambridge Press, 2009.
- <http://www.hearing-voices.org/>
- <http://www.paranoidthoughts.com/>
- <http://mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/hearing-voices/#.V1e3u20hR-U>
- Psyberguide.org (expert review of mental health apps)