Early detection and intervention for the prevention of psychosis

Lise Kieckens & Ilse Willems
RADAR Connect/RCGG - Belgium

Psychotic disorders

RADAR CONNECT 14-25
Connect 14/25 offers:

- Sensibilisation
- Knowledge Promotion
- Early Detection & Intervention
- (Follow-up care)

- Importance of early detection and intervention
- Information about early signs
- Announcement of the initiative
- Networking, case review, consult, liaison
- Training

Connect offers

- CONNECT offers:
  - 1st contact with the context or referring facility within 5 days
  - Collaboration
  - Consult by telephone or face to face
  - Assessment
  - Assertive en outreaching care
  - Goal-oriented & free assistance
  - Appropriate referral
Susceptibility to Psychosis

If you have 100 Flemish people, there are 15 of them who experience psychotic-like symptoms and there are 7 with psychotic symptoms who need early intervention or further treatment... 1 in 3 people develop a psychosis that requires a multidisciplinary treatment.

What is psychosis?

A *compilation of experiences and symptoms* that result in a *loss of contact with reality* or a *different perception* of the surrounding world.
What is psychosis?

• A complex psychiatric disorder
• No single symptom is common to all patients
• Many different symptoms
• Often accompanied by:
  o lack of awareness of one’s illness
  o inability to check what is real and what not
  o feeling that the surrounding environment has changed

Misconceptions and prejudices about psychosis

“Het geheim van de hersenchip.”
Zelfgids voor mensen met een psychose
Psychotic experiences as a continuum

Unusual experiences 100%
Subclinical psychotic experiences 15%
Psychotic symptoms 7%
Psychotic spectrum disorder 2.5%

Psychotic symptoms

A surplus = Positive symptoms*
Disturbance in or excess of normal functioning (ex. hallucination)

A deficiency = Negative symptoms*
Decline or disappearance of a normal function (ex. self neglect)
Positive symptoms

• Hallucinations
• Delusions
• Suspicion
• Excitement
• Agression
• Thought disorders

Negative symptoms

• Diminished emotional expression
• Diminished awareness of emotions
• Avolition
• Lack of energy
• Lack of motivation
• Difficulty to keep going on
• Withdrawing into oneself
Psychotic symptoms have an impact on all aspects of life

- perception
- thinking
- behaviour
- feelings
- global functioning
Psychotic Symptoms
Distortions of perception

**Hallucinations** = sensory experiences without a source

- Visual: seeing images, visions, shadows, ...
- Auditive: hearing voices, other noises, ...
- Tactile: feeling on/in the body, ...
- Olfactory/gustative: smelling, tasting (f.ex. foul odour), ....

Psychotic symptoms
Thought disorders

**Formal:**

- Inability to think clearly/ Confusion
- Incoherent thinking
- Fuzzy logic
- Impaired abstract thinking
- Perseveration
Psychotic symptoms
Thought disorders

Content:

- Magical thinking
- Delusions
  - Thought insertion, withdrawal, broadcasting..
  - Persecutory
  - Grandiose
  - Religious
  - Jealous
  - ...

Cognitive symptoms:

- Attention
- Concentration
- Problem solving capacity
- Planning and executive functioning
- Memory
Psychotic symptoms
Behavioural disorders

- Hyperactivity
- Excitement
- Talking too fast and too much
- Bizarre behaviour
- Loss of interest
- Loss of initiative
- Talking slowly and sparse
- Difficulties to keep on going
- Social withdrawal
- Lack of self care
- Apathy

Symptoms of psychoses
Disorders of feelings

- Enthusiastic and euphoric mood
- Irritable
- Suspicious
- Flattened affect
  (less showing/expressing emotions)
- Emotionally less approachable
- Enjoying things less
  (>Depression)
  (>Anxiety)
Symptoms of psychoses
Difficulties in daily functioning

- Daily activities
- Study and work
- Initiating and holding on to a relationship
- Free time
- ...

Distortions of perception
- Hallucinations
- Hypersensitivity
- Being down, anxious, flattened affect

Thought disorders
- Disorganization, memory
- Disorganized thinking
- Overactive, agitated, aggression, talking a lot...

Behavioural disorders
- Withdrawal, doing less...

Disorder in emotions
- It is hard to initiate or hold on to relationships, work, study, free time,…

Disorders in general functioning
- ...
Phases in psychosis

- Risk factors in the premorbid phase
  - Genetic vulnerability
  - Living in a big city
  - Unhealthy influences during pregnancy: viral infections, trauma
  - Migration
  - Substance abuse
  - Early childhood trauma
- Prodromal phase (spontaneous recovery):
  - Cognitive problems: attention, concentration, memory, executive functions
  - Diminished social functioning
  - Changing moods: depression, anxiety
  - Behavioural changes: aggression, diminished functioning

Possible early signs

- The feeling that something isn’t right
- Inexplicable suffering
- The thought of being followed, but you know it is not the case
- Unusual experiences
  - senses: one seeks an explanation
  - self-estrangement, estrangement from others
  - being less moved by others and events
  - derealisation
- Sleep disorders
- Loss of energy/ too much energy
Possible signs

- too intense, too much thinking, too much thoughts, too fast thinking, thought stopping
- reading too much into what is happening with a tendency to interpret it as though it says something about your own life. for example: seeing special meaning in advertising, shop windows having the feeling that others have it in for you
- feeling as though you are influenced by others or a force
- having difficulties explaining oneself
- losing control of your own movements
- fear of becoming insane
- diminished functioning (school, cognitive, social, self care)

Checklist psychoserisico (French & Morrison, 2004)

Indicatie
Bij minstens 20 punten of minstens 1 *** item (ook als totaal minder is dan 20 punten), overweeg contact op te nemen
Screening and assessment

- Cognitive functioning
- Social and family anamnesis
- behaviour changes
- substance abuse
- Mood (incl. suicidal thoughts)
- Daily structure and self care
- Unusual experiences

some tools
How to speak with youngsters who have some psychotic symptoms?

- making connection, exploring how their relationships with their family/friends are.
- talk to them, hold on to them but not forcing them into anything
- name the behaviour or (non) verbal language

Tools in communication

- **Don’t discuss** about wrong or right
- **Don’t judge** the delusions
- Create a safe space
- Make room for talking and venting
- Take some distance when necessary
- Talk **WITH** someone, not **ABOUT** someone
- **Motivate** the person to seek out help voluntarily
- **Sharing** is healing
- **Take care of yourself**
- Have respect for the recovery process
- **Crisis card**

https://www.psychosenet.nl/psychose/tips-bij-psychose/

**Tools in communication**

- Make a connection
- Offer perspective
- Recovery of symptoms
- Societal recovery
- Personal recovery
Make a connection

being present (holding on, being there and staying there)

Flexibility (according to appointments, frequency, location, subjects, the way you make contact,...)

Creativity in building trust

Discussion about reality versus investigate together
give space to talk about difficult subjects (suicide, psychotic symptoms...)
figuring out together what gives the most burden
the patient is in control
involving the context (family, partner, important others)
keep questioning yourself, what you do and say, talk to colleagues

Offer perspective

Psychoeducation
What is psychosis?
living with a psychotic vulnerability and perspective for the future
Tools to understand and points who need attention (plan of action in case of mental difficulty, day and night structure, ...)
Normalize (stress vulnerability model)
work together: together with the youngster you figure out who is important, who he or she wants to talk to, who can help,
Assessment and diagnose
Symptom recovery

Psychotherapy

• give symptoms a voice (give meaning to the symptoms)
• teach to handle and understand the symptoms (fear, feeling down, suspicion and mistrust, testing hallucinations/thought disorder as in “is this real”?)
• teach to learn to handle stress or reduce stress
• Structure: fix the structure of day and night
• Recover: activate, stimulate

Self care and daily activity

• finding a balance between over and under stimulation
• training some skills: social, cognitive, motorial, ... psychoeducation
• “no” to substance abuse

a psychiatrist visit:

• medication: pay attention to side effects and taking medication on time
Societal recovery

- breaking isolation
- taking responsibility again
- Arbeidsrehabilitatie: building up work again
- Hobby’s (things you did before and you loved, ...)
- gradually rebuilding your engagement with society
- training your social skills
- engaging in family and social network, and give the context support and coaching
- preventing relaps

Reflections, questions?