

Raising the standard of care to improve the long-term outcome in schizophrenia

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Schizophrenia is a multidimensional mental illness characterized by a complex set of symptoms that are usually debilitating and chronic.

While schizophrenia is commonly identified by positive symptoms such as delusions and hallucinations, long-term outcome is predominantly affected by negative symptoms and cognitive deficits. These cognitive deficits include impaired executive functions that affects planning, abstract thinking and rule flexibility ; processing deficits such as inability to inhibit inappropriate responses and irrelevant sensory information ; attention impairments and memory problems.

Severe negative and cognitive symptoms make treatment difficult and are associated with impaired self-care. In addition to psychiatric symptoms, patients with schizophrenia suffer from medical and physical comorbidities that have a negative impact on psychiatric and physical health outcomes. The net result is a 20% reduction in life expectancy in comparison to the general population.

The broad range of symptoms, psychiatric and medical risk factors, and comorbidities found in patients with schizophrenia must be carefully addressed in treatment to optimize long-term outcome. Consequently, proper long-term care of schizophrenia must include multi-modal strategies that address the complex psychiatric, medical and social needs of patients.