

Schizophrenia

Introduction

Schizophrenia is a chronic, severe, and disabling condition that occurs in 1% of the general population. Available treatments can relieve many of the disorder's symptoms, but most people who have schizophrenia must cope with some residual symptoms as long as they live. Many people with the disorder now lead rewarding and meaningful lives in their communities. Schizophrenia usually has its onset in late adolescence to the mid-20s in men and late-20s in women.

Symptoms of schizophrenia include:

- Hallucinations
- Delusions
- Thought disorders
- Social withdrawal
- Lack of motivation
- 'Blunted' emotions
- Inappropriate responses
- Impaired thinking and memory
- Lack of insight
- Poor ability to plan
- Problems with attention

Impact on Study

Students with schizophrenia

- may have side effects from medication which include drowsiness, dizziness, blurred vision and a range of other symptoms
- lack of motivation

What is helpful:

- Break things down into manageable steps
- Collaborate with parents, other school staff, physicians and other medical practitioners - they may already have developed a treatment plan
- Engage in a positive and supportive relationship with the student. Most students need a positive adult relationship
- Encourage the student to access the Counselling Centre (take them to make their first appointment)
- Be flexible about work expectations (allow extensions for exams and assignments)
- Assist and support the student to reintegrate back into the school environment after periods of absence

What is not helpful:

- Putting unnecessary pressure on the student
- Ignoring any changes in mood or behaviour that you notice in the student
- Treating the student differently or fearing them
- Thinking that the person is "crazy" or "insane"
- Thinking the person has 'split personalities' or is intellectually disabled

Links:

www.sane.org.au