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THE 'SCHIZOPHRENIA POSTDROME': A STUDY OF LOW-LEVEL POSITIVE SYMPTOMS AFTER REMISSION OF FIRST EPISODE SCHIZOPHRENIA

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Background: Despite remission being the primary objective following the first episode of schizophrenia, clinically stabilised patients are rarely studied.

Aims: To assess the extent and fluctuation of low-level positive symptoms in patients who are in remission following their first episode of schizophrenia, and consider whether symptoms displayed are similar to those exhibited in the prodromal population.

Methods: Eleven patients who had recovered for at least six months following one episode of schizophrenia and subsequently fulfilled remission criteria were interviewed four times over the course of three months. Interviews were based on the Structured Interview of Prodromal Symptoms (SIPS), an in-depth assessment of low-level symptoms that is widely used in the prodromal group. Data was compared to equivalent results from the prodromal population (with data provided by the local ED:IT service).

Results: Over the course of the interviews 73% of participants displayed attenuated positive symptoms, predominantly unusual thought content and suspiciousness. 18% experienced brief limited intermittent psychotic symptoms (BLIPS). Analysis with Friedman's test revealed no significant fluctuation in positive symptoms, indicating that they are stable over time. Furthermore, the symptoms exhibited in the sample were closely comparable to those in the prodromal group in the ED:IT service.

Conclusions: The majority of patients in remission are experiencing a form of 'postdrome', which appears to be an enduring state. The presence of these symptoms may put patients at an increased risk of relapse. Larger-scale research is required to follow-up this novel preliminary study.

Declaration of interest: None.