
THE INFLUENCE OF AGE AND FAMILY FACTORS IN SHAPING PATHWAYS TO CARE IN FIRST EPISODE PSYCHOSIS

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Introduction: Adequate pathways to care are a prerequisite for early detection and intervention in First Episode Psychosis (FEP). Two systematic reviews examined the influence of ethnicity, social and clinical factors on psychosis care pathways. Accessibility to health services differs for under 18s, yet differences in care pathways between age groups and the impact of family factors have not been investigated.

Objectives: To investigate the influence of family factors in help-seeking pathways for adolescents with FEP.

Method: Naturalistic cross-sectional study of 1351 FEP (14-35 years) referred to Early Intervention Psychosis teams (London, UK; 2003-2009). Care pathways included accounts on who initiated help-seeking process, initial contact points (GP, emergency services, education, social services, police and court/prison), and family factors (social support, living arrangements and family load of mental illness).

Results: For the majority of adolescents (n=118) and adults (n=1232), first and second contact points were GP (30% vs 42%) and emergency services (18% vs 23%). However, these two services accounted for less than half of the adolescents' sample. Adolescents made higher use of education (p<0.001). Family factors, such as good social support (p=0.036), living with carers (p<0.001) and family load of mental illness (p=0.018), were associated with family taking a leading role in problem recognition.

Conclusions: Adolescents with psychosis differ from adults in their contact points when seeking help. Problem recognition is a complex process which involves identifying and legitimizing mental health concerns. Parental awareness and perception of problems revealed as a key step in seeking help for adolescents.