
Unit Specification

UMH11 – Understanding schizophrenia

Unit reference number: K/618/6291

Level: 2

Guided Learning (GL) hours: 9

Overview

Learners will develop an understanding of schizophrenia. Learners will explore what is meant by the term schizophrenia, the possible causes and the impact that schizophrenia has on the individual and others. Learners will also explore the management and support options that are available for people suffering from schizophrenia.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit, learners will:

LO1 Understand schizophrenia

LO2 Understand the causes of schizophrenia

LO3 Understand how schizophrenia can affect individuals and others

LO4 Understand how to manage and support people with schizophrenia

Unit content

LO1 Understand schizophrenia

Know what is meant by the term schizophrenia

Taught content

- Schizophrenia is a severe long-term mental health condition. It causes a range of different psychological symptoms
- Schizophrenia is often described as a type of psychosis. Psychosis is when people lose some contact with reality experiencing hallucinations and delusions
- Schizophrenia is characterised by distortions in thinking, perception, emotions, language, sense of self and behaviour
- Common experiences include hallucinations (hearing voices or seeing things that are not there) and delusions (fixed, false beliefs)
- <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/schizophrenia>
- Schizophrenia facts and figures:
 - Schizophrenia is a chronic and severe mental disorder affecting 20 million people worldwide (WHO 2019)
 - People with schizophrenia are 2-3 times more likely to die early than the general population (WHO 2019)
 - At any one time about 220,000 people are being treated for schizophrenia in the UK by the NHS
 - Schizophrenia accounts for around 30% of all spending on adult mental health in the NHS
 - Mental illness generally will cost the UK economy around £77 billion each year or around 4% of GDP
 - <https://livingwithschizophreniauk.org/facts-and-figures/>

Know the signs and symptoms of schizophrenia

Taught content

- Many experiences and behaviours can be part of schizophrenia. The uniqueness of an individual's experience means that signs and symptoms can be quite different. However there are some commonly recognised symptoms including:
 - Hallucination: hearing, seeing or feeling things that are not there
 - Delusion: fixed false beliefs or suspicions not shared by others in the person's culture and that are firmly held even when there is evidence to the contrary
 - Abnormal behaviour: disorganised behaviour such as wandering aimlessly, mumbling or laughing to self, strange appearance, self-neglect or appearing unkempt
 - Disorganised speech: incoherent or irrelevant speech
 - Feeling disconnected from your emotions
 - A lack of interest in things
 - Difficulty concentrating

- Wanting to avoid people
- <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/schizophrenia>
- <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/schizophrenia/about-schizophrenia/>

Understand three conditions with similar symptoms to schizophrenia

Taught content

- Schizoaffective disorder which has 2 parts to it
 - Schizo referring to psychotic symptoms
 - Affective refers to mood symptoms
 - Schizoaffective disorder is a condition where symptoms of both psychotic and mood disorders are present together during one episode (or within a two week period of each other). This can make it very challenging to diagnose
- Personality disorders
 - There are currently 10 types of personality disorders recognised by psychiatrists grouped into 3 categories
 - Suspicious
 - Emotional and impulsive
 - Anxious
 - Each personality disorder has its own diagnostic criteria which must be satisfied
 - The understanding of personality disorders is constantly evolving and there is quite some controversy regarding these diagnoses
 - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/schizoaffective-disorder/about-schizoaffective-disorder/>
- Bipolar disorder
 - Bipolar disorder is a mental health condition that affects your moods, which can swing from 1 extreme to another. It used to be known as manic depression
 - People with bipolar disorder have episodes of:
 - Depression – feeling very low and lethargic
 - Mania – feeling very high and overactive
 - <https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Bipolar-disorder/>

LO2 Understand the causes of schizophrenia

Know the possible causes of schizophrenia

Taught content

- The exact causes of this condition are unknown but it is believed to be caused by a combination of genetics and environmental factors and psychosocial factors (WHO 2019)
- Some proposed factors linked with schizophrenia are:
 - Stressful life events
 - Stressful or life changing events may trigger schizophrenia
- Drug and alcohol use
 - It is unknown if drug and alcohol abuses can cause schizophrenia or if people who engage in this type of behaviour are more prone to schizophrenia. Research has shown though that where someone already has symptoms of schizophrenia, drug and alcohol abuse can worsen symptoms. Alcohol and smoking may reduce the effectiveness of medicine used to treat the condition
 - Research has shown that stronger forms of cannabis increase your risk of developing schizophrenia
 - <https://www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/about-mental-illness/learn-more-about-conditions/schizophrenia/>
- Genetic inheritance
 - You are more likely to suffer from this condition if you have a family member who also suffers from schizophrenia
- Differences in brain chemistry
 - There is evidence that imbalances between neurotransmitters notably dopamine and serotonin may be one of the causes of schizophrenia
 - There is also a potential link with disrupted brain development in pregnancy or early childhood
 - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/schizophrenia/causes/>
- Complications during pregnancy and birth – There is no clear pattern in the research into this but it has been evidenced that Obstetric complications, that is a difficulty in pregnancy or birth, are found to have occurred in about 40% of people with schizophrenia
- <https://livingwithschizophreniauk.org/causes/>

Know the myths and misconceptions surrounding schizophrenia

Taught content

- Although schizophrenia has been around for over a hundred years it is still not fully understood. Therefore, schizophrenia is often surrounded by a number of myths and misconceptions
- The main myths about schizophrenia are:
 - Schizophrenia means spilt personality – This is not true. Schizophrenia comes from the Greek words meaning 'split' and 'mind' and refers to changes in mental function
 - Schizophrenia causes people to be violent – Evidence shows that individuals with schizophrenia are very unlikely to become violent. On the contrary those with

psychosis are more likely to be victims of violent crime

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12948997/>

- Schizophrenia is very rare – Schizophrenia affects people from all walks of life and social backgrounds. It is a significant UK and global mental health condition (WHO 2019)
- Schizophrenia is caused by your upbringing – this myth was often associated with the term ‘bad mothering’ and often stigmatised families as being the cause

LO3 Understand how schizophrenia can affect individuals and others

Know how schizophrenia can affect an individual and their life

Taught content

- The signs and symptoms described above illustrate how the individual is affected
- However, consideration should be given to the medications used, described below, that can also have a significant effect on an individual
- Schizophrenia is associated with considerable disability and may affect educational and occupational performance
- The World Health Organisation makes the following 2 profound statements
 - People with schizophrenia are 2-3 times more likely to die early than the general population. This is often due to physical illnesses, such as cardiovascular, metabolic and infectious diseases
 - Stigma, discrimination and violation of human rights of people with schizophrenia is common
- <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/schizophrenia>
- Individuals with Schizophrenia experience positive and negative symptoms. This is not referring to good or bad but
 - Positive symptoms. Experiences or behaviours which add to an individual's life. These include hearing or seeing things that others don't. Having a belief that something is real when it isn't. Feelings of being controlled by outside forces such as having ones thoughts and actions taken over. These delusions can be very frightening
 - Negative symptoms. Experiences or behaviours that take away from an individual's life. These may include finding things less enjoyable or interesting. Having less motivation. These symptoms often result in individuals not being able to cope well with everyday tasks and household chores
- Suicide and self-harm are common with individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia
- <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/schizophrenia/about-schizophrenia/>
- <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/s/schizophrenia>
- Individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia are often prescribed medication (antipsychotics) to manage the symptoms. Some of the medications can have quite profound effects on the individual. These can be:
 - Shaking
 - Muscle twitches
 - Muscle spasms
 - Drowsiness
 - Weight gain
 - Blurred vision

Know how schizophrenia can affect others

Taught content

- Schizophrenia is expressed in a wide ranging way between individuals. (Refer to the signs and symptoms section)
- Some of the behaviours potentially displayed by somebody experiencing schizophrenia maybe very upsetting and frustrating for the friend or family member to witness and experience. Behaviours include:
 - Feeling disconnected from their emotions
 - A lack of interest in things
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Wanting to avoid people
- The behaviour displayed by somebody with this condition can become very distressing for others especially when a psychotic episode is occurring
- A lack of understanding can cause even more frustration and distress
- Recognising and dealing with schizophrenia in teenage years is particularly challenging as it is hard to distinguish between 'normal' teenage behaviour and the early signs of developing schizophrenia
- Self-harm can also be a factor in schizophrenia and this can take many forms
- The risk of suicide increases to 1 in 10 in individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia
- <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/s/schizophrenia>
- There may be instances where the psychosis is so severe or that the sufferer is in crisis that they may have to be sectioned under the Mental Health Act. This will be a very frightening and stressful event for the family or friends

LO4 Understand how to manage and support people with schizophrenia

Know the possible interventions for schizophrenia

Taught content

- Many people diagnosed with schizophrenia make a recovery, although many may have relapses. Taking care of your health can have a positive impact on schizophrenia and can also have a positive impact on reducing anxiety, depression and fatigue
- A healthy lifestyle including a balanced diet, regular exercise is beneficial
- If you are a smoker quitting smoking has been shown to improve the mental health of people with schizophrenia <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/schizophrenia/living-with/>
- Avoiding drugs and alcohol. These can make the symptoms of schizophrenia worse as they can cause depression and psychosis. Drugs and alcohol can also react badly with anti-psychotic medications
- Joining a self-help group can be beneficial
- Agreeing with a trusted person that they can tell you if you are becoming unwell again
- <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/problems-disorders/schizophrenia>

Describe the treatment options available for people experiencing schizophrenia

Taught content

- Medication. Known as anti-psychotics
- These are used to treat the most disturbing symptoms of the condition but are not the only answer. Their effects are aimed at:
 - Weakening delusions and hallucinations gradually, over a period of a few weeks
 - Help thoughts to be clearer
 - Increase motivation and ability to look after oneself – although too much medication (or the wrong medication) can have the opposite effect
- <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/problems-disorders/schizophrenia>
- There is a range of medications available and some of them can have adverse side effects which have to be monitored by the prescribing professional
- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). CBT is a talking therapy that can help one manage their problems by changing the way they think and behave
- Counselling and supportive psychotherapy – This allows individuals to talk things through in depth and to get help with problems of daily life
- Family meetings are held over a period of about 6 months. This is a discussion about schizophrenia and help and advice for supporting someone with schizophrenia and advice helping with practical problems which occur
- Arts Therapies. These should be provided by an arts therapist registered by the Health and Care Professions Council. These are usually group sessions and the aim is to
- Enable the individual with psychosis or schizophrenia to experience themselves differently and to develop new ways of relating to others
- Help individuals to express themselves and to organise their experience into a satisfying aesthetic form
- Help people to accept and understand feelings that may have emerged during the creative process
- <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg178/chapter/1-Recommendations#preventing-psychosis-2>

Know the organisations available to help with the management and support of schizophrenia

Taught content

- The NHS in the form of Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) or Early Intervention Team
- This will form an integrated approach and include a mental health worker who is the care coordinator
- Community psychiatric nurses can give space to talk and also help manage medications
- An occupational therapist to assist with current skills and address areas that aren't doing so well. They can also help individuals to do more for themselves and assist with social interactions. Vocational rehabilitation or recovery workers can help individuals get back into work, education or other meaningful/rewarding activities
 - <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/problems-disorders/schizophrenia>
- Rethink mental illness – A charitable provider for those living with mental illness who aim to have a direct impact on the care people receive
 - <https://www.rethink.org/>
- Mind – Explains schizophrenia, including possible causes and how to access treatment
 - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/schizophrenia/about-schizophrenia/>
- Living with schizophrenia – publish the views and experiences of people who have known schizophrenia
 - <https://livingwithschizophreniauk.org>

Guide to taught content

The content contained within the unit specification is not prescriptive or exhaustive but is intended to provide helpful guidance to teachers and learners with the key areas that will be covered within the unit and relating to the kinds of evidence that should be provided for each assessment objective specific to the unit learning outcomes.

Assessment requirements

1. Knowledge outcomes

Learners must complete an external theory examination for this unit. This will consist of a multiple-choice question paper which is mapped to the relevant assessment criteria stated below. The theory examination will test the knowledge and understanding from across learning outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Learners should use the unit content sections of this unit to aid revision since exam questions will test the full breadth of content over time.

| Learning Outcome | Assessment Criteria | Assessment requirement |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| LO1 Understand schizophrenia | 1.1. Describe what is meant by the term 'schizophrenia' | External theory examination |
| | 1.2. Describe the signs and symptoms of schizophrenia | |
| | 1.3. Outline three conditions with similar symptoms to schizophrenia | |

| Learning Outcome | Assessment Criteria | Assessment requirement |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| LO2 Understand the causes of schizophrenia | 2.1. Describe the possible causes of schizophrenia | External theory examination |
| | 2.2. Outline the myths and misconceptions surrounding schizophrenia | |

| Learning Outcome | Assessment Criteria | Assessment requirement |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| LO3 Understand how schizophrenia can affect individuals and others | 3.1. Describe how schizophrenia can affect an individual and their life | External theory examination |
| | 3.2. Describe how schizophrenia can affect others | |

| Learning Outcome | Assessment Criteria | Assessment requirement |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| LO4 Understand how to manage and support people with schizophrenia | 4.1. Describe the possible interventions for schizophrenia | External theory examination |
| | 4.2. Describe the treatment options available for people experiencing schizophrenia | |
| | 4.3. Outline two organisations available to help with the management and support of schizophrenia | |

Document History

| Version | Issue Date | Changes | Role |
|---------|------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
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