



**ITEC**



**VTCT**

# **UMH11** – Understanding schizophrenia

# Learning outcomes

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



# LO1: Content and Assessment criteria

- 1.1. Describe what is meant by the term 'schizophrenia'
- 1.2. Describe the signs and symptoms of schizophrenia
- 1.3. Outline three conditions with similar symptoms to schizophrenia



# Definitions and descriptions

- **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)



# 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/>



# General signs and symptoms associated with schizophrenia

- Hallucination – hearing, seeing or feeling things that are not there
- Delusion – fixed false beliefs or suspicions not shared by others 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



# Three conditions with similar symptoms to schizophrenia

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)



# Three conditions with similar symptoms to schizophrenia

## 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





# Three conditions with similar symptoms to schizophrenia

## 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



# LO2: Content and Assessment criteria

2.1. Describe the possible causes of schizophrenia

2.2. Outline the myths and misconceptions surrounding schizophrenia



# Possible causes of schizophrenia

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:
  - Research has shown though that where someone already has symptoms of schizophrenia, drug and alcohol abuse can worsen symptoms
  - Research has shown that stronger forms of cannabis increase your risk of developing schizophrenia



# Possible causes of 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

- **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



# Myths and misconceptions surrounding schizophrenia

- 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
  - 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: Content and Assessment criteria

- 3.1. Describe how schizophrenia can affect an individual and their life
- 3.2. Describe how schizophrenia can affect others



# How schizophrenia can affect an individual and their life

- 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



# How schizophrenia can affect an individual and their life

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





# How schizophrenia can affect an individual and their life

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



# How schizophrenia can affect others

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



# How schizophrenia can affect others

- The behaviour displayed by somebody with this condition can become very distressing for others especially when a psychotic episode is occurring
- 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
- The risk of suicide increases to 1 in 10 in individuals diagnosed with 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: Content and Assessment criteria

- 4.1. Describe the possible interventions for schizophrenia
- 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



# Possible interventions for schizophrenia

- A healthy lifestyle including a balanced diet, regular exercise is beneficial
- Quitting smoking has been shown to improve the mental health of people with schizophrenia
- Avoiding drugs and alcohol. These can make the symptoms of schizophrenia worse as they can cause depression and psychosis
- Joining a self-help group can be beneficial
- Agreeing with a trusted person that they can tell you if you are becoming unwell again



# Treatment options available for people experiencing schizophrenia

- 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



# Treatment options available for people experiencing schizophrenia

- 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 and support
- Arts Therapies. These should be provided by an arts therapist registered by the Health and Care Professions Council with the aim of:
  - Enabling the individual with psychosis or schizophrenia to experience themselves differently
  - 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



# Organisations available to help with the management support of schizophrenia

- The NHS in the form of Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) or Early Intervention Team
- 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
- Rethink mental illness – A charitable provider for those living with mental illness which aims to have a direct impact on the care people receive
  - <https://www.rethink.org/>
- Living with schizophrenia – publish the views and experiences of people who have known schizophrenia
  - <https://livingwithschizophreniauk.org>







# Learning check

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- **Outline** the aims of anti-psychotic medication for the treatment of schizophrenia
- **Outline two** interventions that could help manage schizophrenia
- **Describe two** ways in which living with schizophrenia can influence a person's life
- **Explain** the difference between positive and negative symptoms
- **Outline two** misconceptions associated with schizophrenia
- **Explain two** possible causes of schizophrenia
- **Identify two** conditions with similar symptoms to schizophrenia
- **Outline four** signs and symptoms of schizophrenia

