



A randomised controlled trial of a group intervention to reduce engulfment and self-stigmatisation in first episode schizophrenia

Elizabeth McCay^{1,2}, Heather Beanlands¹, Robert Zipursky³, Paul Roy^{4,5},
Molyn Leszcz^{2,6}, Janet Landeen⁷, Kathy Ryan⁸, Gretchen Conrad⁴, Donna Romano⁶,
Daphne Francis¹, Jennifer Hunt⁴, Lucia Costantini¹ and Eugene Chan¹

1. School of Nursing, Faculty of Community Services, Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

2. Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada

3. Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

4. Champlain District First Episode Psychosis Program, The Ottawa Hospital, Ontario, Canada

5. Department of Psychiatry, University of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

6. Department of Psychiatry, Mount Sinai Hospital, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

7. School of Nursing, Health Sciences Centre, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

8. Centralized Assessment, Triage and Support, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Abstract

Young people coping with first episode schizophrenia may be predisposed to illness engulfment whereby the illness entirely defines self-concept. They require psychosocial intervention to preserve an identity distinct from illness, promote hopefulness, and minimise the impact of stigma, enabling them to embrace a healthy sense of self and an optimistic future. The purpose of this study was to evaluate a group intervention designed to promote healthy self-concepts by reducing self-stigmatisation and engulfment among young adults recovering from first episode schizophrenia. Participants at two first episode psychosis clinics, one in Toronto and one in Ottawa, were assigned to one of two groups: intervention plus treatment as usual, or a control with only treatment as usual. A repeated measures analysis revealed that immediately post-intervention, the treatment group significantly improved on engulfment, hope, and quality of life measures compared with the control. No improvement was observed in self-concept, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and stigma. Intervening early in the course of the illness to address engulfment and self-stigmatisation may enable young people to acquire positive attitudes toward themselves and the future. Future longitudinal data are needed to determine whether this intervention will prevent the development of chronicity and demoralisation over time.

Keywords

engulfment, self-stigmatisation, first episode schizophrenia, young people, group intervention

Contact: Elizabeth McCay, RN, PhD, Associate Professor, School of Nursing, Faculty of Community Services, Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada bmccay@ryerson.ca
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