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### Increasing Awareness of First Episode Psychosis

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# Increasing Awareness of First Episode Psychosis

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Sam Murray, MD Supervising  
Northwest Research Symposium

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# Background

- ▶ First episode psychosis (FEP) is a critical period in the course of schizophrenia.
- ▶ The course of schizophrenia is fluid and malleable.<sup>1-4</sup>
- ▶ Research suggests that early intervention and treatment of psychosis can dramatically alter the course of the illness leading to less symptoms and higher functional capacity many years after early detection.<sup>1-4</sup>
- ▶ First episode psychosis is clinically complex. FEP can be subtle and be confused with age-related behaviors, depression, or the effects of substance use. Patients often do not seek treatment for their symptoms. Thus, treatment can be delayed.
- ▶ Many members of the professional community in Spokane who interact with individuals in at risk age groups report lack understanding of how to appropriately refer a patient for evaluation and management by a psychiatric specialist.

# Project

- ▶ A multi-faceted grant-funded project to improve community understanding of first episode psychosis in Spokane.
- ▶ A needs assessment from qualitative interviews (conducted by researchers at WSU) revealed most professionals wanted additional education on FEP.
- ▶ Drs. Miller and Holley helped Dr. Murray and WSU researchers develop an online, module-based curriculum to provide education about FEP.
- ▶ Drs. Miller and Holley also plan to schedule in-person trainings to multiple audiences:
  - ▶ Teachers, law enforcement, care coordinators, and physicians.
  - ▶ Initial target audiences include staff at a pediatric IOP/PHP program, medical assistants and PCC's at the STHC, and care coordinators involved in collaborative care.

# Institutional Review Board (IRB)

- ▶ Providence IRB exemption was obtained.
- ▶ WSU IRB approval was obtained for qualitative research on community education needs. Drs. Miller and Holley did not participate in qualitative research and were not included in the IRB.

# Needs Assessment

- ▶ Researchers at WSU conducted qualitative interviews with multiple groups of professionals in the Spokane area—including family medicine and internal medicine residents—to create a local needs assessment about education related to FEP.
- ▶ Results revealed most people interviewed felt they needed more education regarding this topic.

# Online Module and Presentation

- ▶ Goal to educating professionals about how to recognize the potential signs and symptoms of early psychosis, and how to gather enough history to decide whether a referral (ideally urgent) to psychiatry is warranted.
- ▶ Content of module and presentation
  - ▶ Review of key history to gather
  - ▶ Guidance on interviewing patients with psychosis
  - ▶ Differential diagnoses for psychosis
  - ▶ When to refer to psychiatry

# When

- ▶ Drs. Miller and Holley participated in this project between July of 2021 to the present.
- ▶ This project has been an ongoing collaboration between WSU, Dr. Murray, and the STHC, for 1-2 years, and aims to complete within the next 1-2 years after educational materials have been delivered.

# What's Next

- ▶ This educational project could be further expanded into standardized trainings for various professionals. It could be updated regularly.
- ▶ There are many opportunities for political advocacy to increase awareness, education, funding, and programming for FEP.
- ▶ This educational project could be easily converted into a QI project with PDSA cycles to improve the quality of the educational content, or to measure and improve outcomes of the project such as rates of screening for FEP or referrals to psychiatric providers.
- ▶ If you're interested in this project, contact James Miller or Sam Holley.

# References

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