



Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a form of psychoses in which deterioration of functioning is marked by serious distortion of thought, perception and mood; bizarre behaviour and social withdrawal. The symptoms of schizophrenia are as follows:

- Delusions
- hallucinations
- disorganized speech
- disorganized or “catatonic” behaviour
- “negative symptoms” which are a reduction in or loss of normal functioning such as speech

Delusions: firmly held beliefs that have no basis in reality. Different categories of exist:

- Delusions of persecution:* the belief that one is being spied upon or mistreated as part of a conspiracy
- Delusions of control:* other people or forces are controlling one’s thoughts and actions
- Delusions of reference:* the belief that one is being referred to which have nothing to do with the individual e.g. during the news
- Delusions of grandeur:* the belief that one is powerful and famous
- Delusions of sin and guilt:* the belief that one has committed grievous sins
- Hypochondriacal delusions:* the belief that one is suffering from terrible and bizarre illness e.g. that their brain is full of mould
- Nihilistic delusions:* the belief that the individual or the world has ceased to exist.

Hallucinations: perception of things that are no there. These can be:

- Auditory:* hearing things
- Visual hallucinations:* seeing things that are not there
- Gustatory hallucinations:* tasting things that are not there
- Sensory hallucinations:* feeling things that are no there
- Olfactory hallucinations:* smelling something that is not there

Disorganised speech: People with schizophrenia have rambling and disjointed speech. They tend to jump from one thing to another and are thus often incoherent.

Disorganised behaviour: Individuals with schizophrenia may engage in repetitive behaviour such as head rubbing, show extremely high levels of motor activity or complete inactivity.

Effects on emotions: People with schizophrenia may also show low or no emotion accompanied by a loss in the ability to experience pleasure. In some cases emotions shown may not be appropriate to the situation e.g. laughing whilst relating a painful story.

Social withdrawal is another effect of schizophrenia with individual slowly withdrawing from their environment.

Prevalence: Around 1-2% of the general population suffers from schizophrenia.

Famous people with schizophrenia:

- John Nash (mathematician)
- Jack Kerouac (writer)
- Syd Barrett (guitarist Pink Floyd)

Treatment: A combination of psychosocial interventions and medication are used to help individuals become in control of their conditions.

Medication: Antipsychotics are prescribed to help deal with schizophrenia.

Psychotherapy: Family therapy, individual therapy and rehabilitation to learn vocational and social skills to be able to live independently are all recommended.