



Schizophrenia: A Fact Sheet to Share

Schizophrenia is a serious disorder that affects how a person thinks, feels and acts. Someone with schizophrenia may have difficulty distinguishing between what is real and what is imaginary, may be unresponsive or withdrawn, and may have difficulty expressing normal emotions in social situations. Symptoms of schizophrenia usually appear between the ages of 13 and 25, and the disease may come and go in cycles of relapse and remission. In rare cases, a person may develop “late-onset” schizophrenia.

Symptoms of Schizophrenia

The presence and severity of symptoms varies among individuals but often include:

- Delusions – false ideas or beliefs
- Hallucinations – seeing or hearing things that are not there
- Disordered thinking, unusual thoughts, difficulty communicating
- Emotional unresponsiveness, apathy
- Poor self-care and self-neglect
- Ritualistic behavior, bizarre expressions and behaviors
- Difficulty focusing or concentrating
- Social withdrawal, lack of motivation, depression

Types of Schizophrenia¹

- Paranoid schizophrenia – A person feels extremely suspicious, persecuted, or grandiose, or experiences a combination of these perceptions.
- Disorganized schizophrenia – A person is often incoherent in speech and thought, but may not have delusions
- Catatonic schizophrenia – A person is withdrawn, mute, and often assumes very unusual body positions
- Residual schizophrenia – A person is no longer experiencing delusions or hallucinations, but has little motivation or interest in life

- Schizoaffective disorder – A person has symptoms of both schizophrenia and a major mood disorder such as depression

Treatment

Many older adults who have endured lifelong schizophrenia did not receive early treatment with the effective drugs that are commonly used now. Others were never diagnosed, due to stigma and fears of treatment. The health, functional life skills, social skills and independence of those with undiagnosed or untreated schizophrenia have likely suffered. “Late-onset” schizophrenia is far less common and often involves people who were considered “odd”, “eccentric” or “paranoid” in earlier life. Late-onset schizophrenia usually comes on the heels of severe stress or illness. With the use of modern medications and good support, the likelihood that the individual can return to positive functioning is favorable. Although no cure for schizophrenia exists, a number of treatments and treatment combination can promote recovery. Most treatment plans are constructed to correct the chemical imbalance, reduce life stress and promote functionality.

For information about finding treatment, look for the Maryland Coalition on Mental Health and Aging’s fact sheet “Accessing Mental Health Care in Maryland.”

More information can be found on the website www.mdaging.org

If you would like more information or assistance, contact Kim Burton at:

kburton@mhamd.org

ⁱ Mental Health America, “Schizophrenia.” N.p. 2015. Web. 25 June 2015.