Making a difference: new treatment options for those living with schizophrenia

Queen’s News Centre
2012-07-24

A recent Queen’s University study has led to a new style of treatment for individuals with schizophrenia. This new approach could lead to better quality of life for those suffering from the disease.

A combination of two psychological treatments has been found to have a long-term impact and improve life skills. Cognitive remediation therapy aims to improve memory, attention and other thinking skills by focusing on the ability of the brain to adapt with training. Functional skills training teaches everyday behaviours like holding a conversation, planning recreational outings and taking care of a household through practice and assistance. Although these two treatments have, individually, led to some improvement in those suffering from schizophrenia, this study shows that a combination can lead to more normalized lifestyles for patients.

“Patients made improvements in their work skills, independent living skills, and community participation over the course of the treatment,” says Christopher Bowie, director of the Cognitive and Psychotic Disorders Laboratory at Queen’s. “Our findings demonstrate that psychological therapies can help individuals with schizophrenia to contribute in real ways to their communities.”

Dr. Bowie led the five year study. The results from this study show a new path to functionality that could, combined with appropriate symptom-reduction medication, greatly improve the quality of life for those with this disease. More information about this study is available in the American Journal of Psychiatry; the abstract is available here.

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