

CLAHRC BITE Brokering Innovation Through Evidence

11 A bite-sized summary of a piece of research supported by NIHR CLAHRC West Midlands

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Don't Turn Your Back on the Symptoms of Psychosis

Background:

- The delay between the onset of a first episode of psychosis and receipt of treatment (DUP) has been consistently shown to predict poorer outcome for young people.
- However, no strategy to reduce DUP has been proven to be effective in the UK.
- This may be because DUP is an inherently complex construct with a variety of potential care pathway delays that may contribute to its duration.
- Our previous research in Birmingham, identified that long help-seeking delays and delays within mental health services were of prime concern in the care pathways of young people with long DUP.

Objective:

A quasi-experimental, proof-of-principle prospective study, targeting known sources of delay, to explore whether such initiatives can significantly reduce DUP in Birmingham, UK.

Turn over to find out more . . .

A Proof-of-Principle, Quasi-Experimental Intervention to Reduce Duration of Untreated Psychosis.

Method:

A new youth access pathway for first-episode psychosis was introduced alongside a psychosis awareness public health campaign. Incident cases of first-episode psychosis were identified and their DUP and care pathways measured. We also used extensive recent DUP data from the NIHR National EDEN study, which was available to define the baseline.

Results:

The relative reduction in DUP in the intervention area was 0.735 (95% CI 0.348 to 0.893; $p=0.0039$) (accounting for baseline period), showing a clear relative reduction.

Conclusion:

Whilst our proof-of-principle trial did not include follow-up assessment of clinical symptoms or treatment outcome (issues which should be future priorities in future DUP research), the real world design of our proof-of-principle study was evidence based; targeted *known* sources of delay in our healthcare setting; was firmly placed in the local context; had strong external validity; had high quality collection of data from a baseline period; and included a prospective control region – increasing the robustness of our evaluation.

Reference

Connor C, Birchwood M, Palmer C, et al. Don't turn your back on the symptoms of psychosis: a proof-of-principle, quasi-experimental public health trial to reduce the duration of untreated psychosis in Birmingham, UK. *BMC Psychiatry*. 2013. 13:67. [[Online](#)]



Recommendations for Practice

The methodology we have used may reduce the DUP of young people experiencing first-episode psychosis. Youth mental health is at the forefront of the UK political agenda and identification of an effective generalized methodology to reduce DUP, for use in a variety of healthcare contexts, sits well within this current political context.

What is NIHR CLAHRC West Midlands?

The Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC) is a partnership between universities (Birmingham, Warwick and Keele) and a number of health and social care organisations in the West Midlands. We are funded by the National Institute for Health Research with a mission to undertake high-quality applied health research focused on the needs of patients to improve health services locally and beyond.

For further information, visit:

www.clahrc-wm.nihr.ac.uk

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