

Systematic Treatment of Persistent Psychosis (STOPP): a Psychological Approach to Facilitating Recovery in Young People with First-episode Psychosis

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In this slim volume, the authors present a succinct how-to manual for practitioners who work with young people with refractory symptoms of first-episode psychosis. In her Preface, Jane Edwards sounds the keynote: "The onset of first-episode psychosis occurs commonly in late adolescence or early adulthood, a critical stage of development in terms of psychological and social functioning. The consequences of failure to respond to standard treatment can be profound, including alienation from family and peers; and disruption of educational, vocational, and occupational goals". The Systematic Treatment of Persistent Psychosis (STOPP) was developed by the Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centre in Melbourne, Australia, to provide intensive interventions for young people experiencing first-episode psychosis who are at risk of developing a chronic course of illness.

Chapter 1 discusses the potential benefits of comprehensive intervention for early psychosis in a young person, and flags the biopsychosocial context in which psychological therapies for first-episode psychosis should be provided. Chapter 2 briefly reviews the theoretical basis for psychological therapy for young people with psychosis, the strengths and limitations of cognitive-behavioural therapies with this target group, and the evolution of STOPP as a flexible combination of cognitive-behavioural approaches and psychodynamic or interpersonal understanding of psychosis.

Chapters 3 to 7 outline the components of the STOPP programme. Chapter 3, titled "Negotiating the therapeutic process", highlights the importance of engagement throughout the course of therapy. Chapters 4 to 7 describe the details of the 4 therapeutic phases: developing a collaborative

working relationship; exploring and coping with psychosis; strengthening the capacity to relate to others; and finishing and moving on.

The first 2 phases of STOPP draw heavily on empirically supported cognitive-behavioural techniques developed by researchers in the UK. In contrast, phases 3 and 4 deal with the more existential issue of integration by facilitating the patient's reflections on self-identity and subjective meaning of the psychotic experience.

Each chapter begins with aims of that particular phase, sets out common difficulties and obstacles encountered by clinicians, and offers workable guidelines and strategies for therapy. The style of the treatment manual is practical and concise, and checklists, illustrative case examples, and recommended reading lists are included.

Systematic Treatment of Persistent Psychosis (STOPP): a Psychological Approach to Facilitating Recovery in Young People with First-episode Psychosis is a useful handbook for mental health professionals who already have some experience with both cognitive-behavioural therapy and first-episode psychosis. Complemented by other background reading, this book may also be suitable as training material for students who are learning to provide psychological intervention for young people with first-episode psychosis.

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