

A Framework for CBT in Holistic Management of Schizophrenia

Objectives: CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy) is recently gaining more interest and acceptance as a standard counseling technique for schizophrenia patients. Initially developed to treat acute symptoms, more recent studies have focused on treating persistent positive and negative symptoms in patients with incomplete remission on antipsychotics alone. There is hope that the broader use of CBT in rehabilitation settings may lead to improvement in holistic management of schizophrenia.

With respect to deploying typical CBT techniques there is a need for building trust and engagement; working collaboratively to understand the meaning of symptoms. These are following important issues:

- understanding the patient's interpretation of past and present events, especially those that the patient feels are related to the development and persistence of their current problems;
- normalizing these experiences and enlightening the patient about the stress-vulnerability model;
- socializing the patient to the cognitive model, including the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors

Methods: With our review of existing data, it is noted that with only adherence to antipsychotic medications, many patients experience both relapse and residual symptoms. It is noted that 14 to 19 percent develop chronic, unremitting, psychotic symptoms. A more recent first-episode psychosis study reported that 15.1 percent of patients had persistent psychosis at two years. These persistent symptoms are often the target of CBT.

Results: Our extensive review shows that in a study, 90 patients were randomized to CBT, which received 19 individual treatment sessions over nine months. Both groups experienced significant decreases in positive and negative symptoms of schizophrenia, but only the CBT group continued to improve at follow up. Only the CBT group experienced a significant decrease in suicidal ideation.

Conclusion: With better application of CBT, there is a great possibility for improved holistic management of schizophrenia patients.