

Glossary of Terms

Acute Schizophrenia

The shortest and most intense period of schizophrenia when the most serious symptoms are found.

Affective Disorder

Also known as Mood Disorder. A mental illness characterized by greatly exaggerated emotional reactions and mood swings from high elation to deep depression. Commonly used terms are *manic depression (or bipolar disorder)* and *depression*— although some people experience only mania and others only depression. These extreme mood changes are unrelated to changes in the person's environment.

Affective Flattening

Limited range and intensity of emotional expression. A negative symptom of schizophrenia. Also referred to as emotional blunting.

Agranulocytosis (ah-gran-yu-lo-si-to-sis)

A serious condition in which white blood cells decrease in number or disappear altogether. This can be a side effect of an antipsychotic medication called clozapine (brand name Clozaril).

Akathisia (ak-ah-thez-e-ah)

The medical word for extreme restlessness. This may include rocking from foot to foot or back and forth, walking in place, pacing, or an inability to sit still. An extremely confused mental state generally accompanies akathisia.

Akinesia

A state of reduced movement; lack of muscle movement.

Alogia (ah-lo-jee-ah)

The loss of ability to speak or understand spoken or written language due to disease or injury of the brain. A negative symptom of schizophrenia.

Amenorrhea (a-men-o-re-ah)

Absence of menstrual periods. This can be a side effect of antipsychotic medications.

Anhedonia (an-he-do-ne-ah)

A lack of pleasure or interest in activities that were previously enjoyed.

Anosognosia (ah-nah-sog-no-see-ya)

A symptom of several brain disorders. Anosognosia is a very severe lack of awareness. It is not simply denial of illness, but a lack of awareness of the illness. The individual cannot understand that he/she is ill.

Anti-cholinergic (an-te-kol-ih-ner-jik)

Blocking the action of acetylcholine, one of the chemicals the body makes to help nerve cells communicate with each other. This describes a group of the most common side effects of psychotropic medications, including dry mouth, blurry vision, palpitations, and constipation.

Antidepressant

Medications used to treat depression. (See Medications.)

Antipsychotic

A group of medications used to treat psychosis. There are two types of antipsychotic medications: *neuroleptics* (also called standard or typical antipsychotics) and *atypicals*. Neuroleptics

are older, first generation medications used to treat serious mental illness. Neuroleptics have a tendency to cause neurological side effects (see extrapyramidal symptoms) such as akinesia (slowed movement), akathisia (restless limbs), and tardive dyskinesia (permanent, irreversible movement disorders). See *Medications, Neuroleptics*. You may find that medical professionals and others use words you are not familiar with. This is a short glossary of some of the most commonly-used terms.

Anxiolytics

Medications used to reduce serious anxiety, tension, and agitation. They used to be known as minor tranquilizers.

Apathy

A lack of interest.

Atypical Antipsychotics

See *Antipsychotic, Medications*.

Avolition (a-vo-lish-un)

The individual lacks energy, spontaneity, and initiative. There is a loss of drive and interest. It's very difficult to begin a new task or to finish any assignment. A negative symptom of schizophrenia.

Bipolar Disorder

A serious affective disorder characterized by extreme changes in mood ranging from high elation to deep depression. An individual with Bipolar Disorder may feel extremely excited with boundless energy, and then suddenly feel very sad and depressed. Previously called Manic Depression.

Blunted Affect/Blunted Emotions

An apparent lack of emotion. The voice may become monotonous and the facial

expression may not change. This does not mean that the individual cannot feel emotions, but that he/she appears emotionless.

Catatonic Behaviour

Unusual motor (physical) behaviour, which shows an extreme lack of reactivity to the surrounding environment. Symptoms include stupor, muscular rigidity, or excitement. A positive symptom of schizophrenia.

Catatonic Schizophrenia

Categorized by a marked disturbance in physical activity. This can be a long period of staying very still in a strange position, being mute, or uncontrolled excitement. This is one of the schizophrenia subtypes.

Central Nervous System (CNS)

The brain and spinal cord. The CNS is responsible for coordinating the activities of all parts of the brain and spinal cord.

Chronic Schizophrenia

The long period of time, following a period of acute schizophrenia, during which the symptoms are much less serious.

Concurrent Diagnosis

A concurrent diagnosis is made when an individual shows symptoms of both a mental illness and substance or alcohol abuse. The term is also used when a person is diagnosed with two or more mental disorders. (Also called Dual Diagnosis or Co-occurring disorders)

Cognitive Impairment

Cognitive abilities include knowing, thinking, learning, and judging. Cognitive impairment means the individual is experiencing difficulty with memory,

concentration, and decision-making.
(These are also called *Executive skills*.)

CT Scanning (Computerized Tomography) (to-mog-raf-ee)

A technique using x-rays or ultrasound waves to produce an image of interior parts of the body. For example, within the skull it can be used to view parts of the brain as an aid to diagnosis.

Delusion

A symptom of many mental illnesses, a delusion is a fixed belief that has no basis in reality. This belief is strongly held even in the face of evidence that it is false. Individuals suffering from this type of thought disorder are often convinced they are famous people, are being persecuted, or are capable of extraordinary accomplishments.

Depersonalization

A feeling that one is becoming unreal, or that one's mind is being separated from his/her body. (Also known as de-realization.)

Depression (de-presh-un)

Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, helplessness, and worthlessness. In many cases the affected individual has a lack of energy and motivation. Sometimes physical symptoms such as slow movement and speech are also present.

Diagnosis

Classification of a disease by studying its signs and symptoms. Schizophrenia is one of many possible diagnostic categories used in psychiatry.

Disordered Speech

Also known as disorganized speech. Disorganized patterns of speech in which

an individual shifts erratically from topic to topic. A positive symptom of schizophrenia.

Disorganized Type Schizophrenia

Categorized by disorganized speech, disorganized behaviour, and flat or inappropriate affect. Severely disrupts the ability of the individual to perform simple tasks of daily living. This is one of the schizophrenia subtypes.

Dopamine (do-pah-meen)

A neurotransmitter found in high concentrations in the limbic system in the brain. Involved in the regulation of movement, thought, and behaviour.

Dual Diagnosis

See *Concurrent* Diagnosis.

Dyskinesia (dis-ki-ne-se-ah)

Involuntary movements usually of the head, face, neck, or limbs.

Dyspnea (disp-ne-ah)

Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.

Dystonia (dis-to-ne-ah)

An extrapyramidal symptom (EPS) caused by some antipsychotic medicines. The main features are sticking out the tongue, abnormal head position, grimacing, neck spasms, and eyes rolling up. (See *Torticollis*.)

Edema (eh-dee-mah)

The build up of watery fluid in parts of the body.

Electroencephalogram (EEG) (e-lek-tro-en-sef-ah-lo-gram)

A recording of the electrical activity from various parts of the brain. It is used to

study the brain's electrical activity, which may be used to help make a diagnosis.

Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT)

A treatment that is occasionally used for serious depression, catatonic schizophrenia, and mania. A convulsion is produced by passing an electric current through the patient's brain while under general anaesthesia. ECT is used primarily for patients suffering from extreme depression for long periods, who are suicidal, and who do not respond to medication or to changes in circumstances.

Extrapyramidal Symptoms (EPS)

The medical term for neurological side effects: a disturbance of facial or body movements. This can be a side effect of antipsychotic medications. Common symptoms include muscle stiffness, tremors, and lack of arm movement when walking. (See *Medications, Neuroleptics, Side Effects.*)

Flight of Ideas

Flight of ideas refers to a period where the individual's thoughts become very accelerated.

Florid Symptoms

The symptoms are obviously worsening.

Galactorrhea (ga-lak-to-re-ah)

An excessive flow of breast milk in men or women. This is sometimes a side effect of antipsychotic medications.

Gradual-Onset Schizophrenia

Symptoms develop so slowly that it often takes a long period of time before the illness is obvious to the individual, his/her family, or his/her friends.

Grossly Disorganized Behaviour

This term describes unusual behaviour in which the individual may act in any number of ways, from silly and childlike to angry and aggressive. A positive symptom of schizophrenia.

Hallucination

A false perception of something that is not really there. Hallucinations may be seen, heard, touched, tasted, or smelled by the ill individual.

Hyperdopaminergia (hi-per-do-pah-min-er-gee-ah)

A neurochemical condition of excess dopamine neurotransmission. This is thought to partly underlie the pathophysiology of schizophrenia.

Hypertonicity

Excessive tension of muscles.

Ideas of Reference

The unfounded belief that objects, events, or people are of personal significance. For example, a person may think that a television program he is watching is all about him.

Inappropriate Affect

Reacting in an inappropriate manner, such as laughing when hearing bad news.

Involuntary Admission

*The process of entering a hospital is called *admission*. Voluntary admission means the patient requests treatment, and is free to leave the hospital whenever he or she wishes. People who are very ill may be admitted to a mental health facility against their will, or *involuntarily*:

- under medical admission certificate or renewal certificate;

- under special court order when they have been charged or convicted with a criminal offence. In this case, they may be held in a forensic facility.

Before someone can be admitted involuntarily, a physician must certify that the person is:

- suffering from a mental disorder and requiring care, protection, and medical treatment in hospital;
- likely to cause harm to self or others or to suffer substantial mental or physical deterioration if not hospitalized.

*This procedure varies from province to province. Contact your provincial health authorities or local mental health organization for more specific details.

Labile mood

An individual in a labile mood has alternating euphoria and irritability.

Limbic System

Group of brain structures composed of the hippocampus and amygdale. Associated with memory storage, the coordination of autonomic functions, and the control of mood and emotion.

Medications

In psychiatry, medication is usually prescribed in either pill or injectable form. Several different types of medications may be used, depending on the diagnosis. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain the names, dosages, and functions of all medications, and to separate generic names from brand names in order to reduce confusion.

Antipsychotics: These reduce agitation, diminish hallucinations and destructive behaviour, and may bring about some correction of other thought disorders. Side effects include changes in the central

nervous system affecting speech and movement, and reactions affecting the blood, skin, liver, and eyes. Periodic monitoring of blood and liver functions is advisable. See *Antipsychotic*.

Antidepressants: These are normally slow-acting drugs, but if no improvement is experienced after six weeks, they may not be effective at all. Some side effects may occur such as dry mouth, drowsiness, or headaches.

Mood Stabilizers: e.g., Lithium Carbonate, used in manic and manic-depressive states to help stabilize the wide mood swings that are part of the condition. Regular blood checks are necessary to ensure proper medication levels. There may be some side effects such as thirst and burning sensations. (Also called Mood Normalizers.)

Tranquilizers: Generally referred to as *benzodiazapines*. These medications can help calm agitation and anxiety. Examples include: Valium, Librium, Ativan, Xanax, Rivotril.

Major Depression

A severe mental illness characterized by feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and worthlessness; often accompanied by a loss of energy or motivation. Some individuals also experience suicidal thoughts.

Mania

An emotional disorder characterized by euphoria or irritability, rapid speech, fleeting thoughts, insomnia, poor attention span, grandiosity, and poor judgment; usually a symptom of bipolar disorder. Positive symptoms of psychosis may also be present.

Motor Neuron

A nerve cell in the spine that causes action in a muscle.

Mental Disorder/ Mental Illness

A substantial disorder of thought or mood which significantly impairs judgment, behaviour, capacity to recognize reality, or ability to cope with ordinary demands of life. It may be due to changes in the brain caused by genetic, toxic, infectious, psychosocial, or traumatic influences. A mental illness usually involves a change in ability and personality.

Mental Health

Describes an appropriate balance between the individual, his or her social group, and the larger environment. These three components combine to promote psychological and social harmony, a sense of well-being, self-actualization, and environmental mastery.

Mental Health Act

Provincial legislation for the medical care and protection of people who have a mental illness. The Mental Health Act also ensures the rights of patients who are involuntarily admitted to hospital, and describes advocacy and review procedures.

Multi-factorial

A term used by doctors in describing the causes for an illness. Basically the term means “multiple factors.”

Multiple Personality Disorder

A personality disorder categorized by the appearance of two or more distinct and separate personalities in one person. In

popular public opinion, this is often the mistaken belief about schizophrenia.

Negative Symptoms

These are symptoms that are considered *missing* from the individual and should be present. These symptoms may include blunted affect (blunted emotions), apathy, a lack of energy or motivation, and emotional or social withdrawal.

Neuroleptics (nur-o-lep-tiks)

A group of medications used in the treatment of schizophrenia and other serious mental illnesses with psychosis. (See *Antipsychotics, Medications.*)

Neurotransmitter

Molecules that carry chemical messages between nerve cells. Neurotransmitters are released from neurons, diffuse across the minute space between cells (synaptic cleft), and bind to receptors located on post-synaptic neuronal surfaces.

Non-Compliant

This means that the ill individual is not taking his or her medication or following the treatment plan. There are various reasons for non-compliance, including inability to remember to take medication, unpleasant side effects, or a lack of awareness about being ill. (See *Anosognosia.*)

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

An anxiety disorder in which individuals become trapped in repetitive patterns of thoughts (obsessions) and behaviours (compulsions) that are potentially disabling, senseless, and extremely hard to overcome.

Out-patient

An individual who comes to the hospital for medical or surgical care but does not need to remain in the hospital afterwards as an in-patient.

Paranoia

A mental state that includes unreasonable suspicions of people and situations. A person who is paranoid may be suspicious, hostile, feel very important, or may become extremely sensitive to rejection by others. Paranoia falls within the category of delusional thinking.

Paranoid Type Schizophrenia

Categorized by the presence of prominent delusions and auditory hallucinations in an individual whose cognitive functioning is well organized. This is one of the schizophrenia subtypes.

Parkinson's Disease

A disease mostly affecting middle-aged and elderly people, characterized by tremors and rigid, slow movements.

Parkinsonism (par-kin-son-izm)

A group of symptoms including loss of movement, a lack of facial expression, stiff gait when walking, tremor, or stooped posture. These symptoms are sometimes side effects of older antipsychotic medications. (See Neuroleptics.)

Personality Disorder

A deeply ingrained and maladjusted pattern of behaviour that persists over many years. It is usually well-established in later adolescence or early adulthood. The abnormality of behaviour is serious enough to cause suffering either to the person involved or to other people.

Positron Emission Tomography (PET)

A technique used to evaluate the activity of brain tissues. PET scanning is used as a research tool in schizophrenia, cerebral palsy, and similar types of brain damage.

Positive Symptoms

These are symptoms that are added to the individual's behaviour that should not be present. These symptoms may include delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech, and grossly disorganized or catatonic behaviour.

Postural Hypotension

Also known as orthostatic hypotension, it is characterized by low blood pressure that can cause dizziness and fainting after standing or sitting up quickly. This is sometimes an early side effect when starting some psychotropic medicines.

Poverty of Speech

The inability to start or take part in a conversation, particularly "small talk." This is a very common symptom in schizophrenia and prevents people with this condition from taking part in many social activities.

Prodromal Phase

The first or early stage of an illness, before the onset of the full-blown illness.

Prolactin

A hormone produced by the pituitary gland in the brain. Stimulates lactation and ovarian function. Excess prolactin release can cause side effects common to many older antipsychotic agents, including abnormal menstrual cycles, abnormal breast milk production, gynecomastia (excessive development of the male mammary glands), and sexual dysfunction.

Psychosis

A group of symptoms of several major mental disorders. These symptoms include loss of contact with reality, breakdown of normal social functioning, and extreme personality changes. People affected with this condition usually experience delusions and/or hallucinations.

Psychotherapy

Basically “talk” therapy. Psychotherapy is a form of treatment involving discussions between the patient and the mental health professional, and is often combined with prescribed medications. There are many different types of psychotherapy with different aims and approaches.

Psychotropics

Drugs used in the treatment of mental illnesses. (See Antipsychotic, Medications.)

Rapid or Sudden Onset

Schizophrenia

The symptoms develop quickly, and the individual experiences dramatic behaviour changes in a matter of a few days or weeks.

Receptor

A protein molecule that resides on the surface or in the nucleus of a cell. Receptors recognize and bind specific molecules of appropriate size, shape, and charge.

Residual Schizophrenia

This refers to signs of schizophrenia which may remain in some people after the most serious schizophrenic episode has passed.

Schizoaffective Disorder

The diagnosis of this illness is made when the clinical picture is not “typical” of

either schizophrenia or a mood disorder, but the person shows symptoms of both illnesses (psychosis and severe mood swings). Treatment usually consists of a combination of antipsychotic medications, antidepressants, and/or mood stabilizers.

Schizoid

A term sometimes used to describe a person who is unusually shy, aloof, sensitive, and withdrawn.

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a severe and often chronic brain disease. Common symptoms include personality changes, withdrawal, severe thought and speech disturbances, hallucinations, delusions, bizarre behaviours.

Side Effects

Side effects occur when there is drug reaction that goes beyond or is unrelated to the drug’s therapeutic effect. Some side effects are tolerable, but some are so disturbing that the medication must be stopped. Less severe side effects include dry mouth, restlessness, stiffness, and constipation. More severe side effects include blurred vision, excess salivation, body tremors, nervousness, sleeplessness, tardive dyskinesia, and blood disorders. Some drugs are available to control side effects. Learning to recognize side effects is important because they are sometimes confused with symptoms of the illness. A doctor, pharmacist, or mental health worker can explain the difference between symptoms of the illness and side effects due to medication. (See Antipsychotics, Extrapyramidal Symptoms, Medications, Neuroleptics.)

Treatment

Refers to remedies or therapy designed to cure a disease or relieve symptoms. In psychiatry, treatment is often a combination of medication, counselling (advice), and recommended activities. Together, these make up the individual patient's treatment plan.

Serotonin-Dopamine Antagonists (SDAs)

Also known as “atypical” or newer antipsychotics. Unlike their predecessors, this newer class of medications treats both the positive and negative symptoms of schizophrenia and other serious mental illnesses, with fewer side effects. Examples include SEROQUEL® (quetiapine fumarate), Clozaril® (clozapine), Zyprexa® (olanzapine), and Risperdal® (risperidone). (See Antipsychotics, Medications.)

Serotonin

A neurotransmitter that relays impulses between nerve cells (neurons) in the central nervous system. Functions thought to be regulated by nerve cells that use serotonin include mood and behaviour, physical coordination, appetite, body temperature, and sleep.

Split Personality

There is no such thing as a “split personality.” Often in popular public opinion, this is a mistaken belief about schizophrenia. (See Multiple Personality Disorder.)

Stereotypical Behaviour

A description of repeated movements that have no obvious cause and are more complex than a tic. The movement may be repeated in a regular sequence; for

example, rocking backwards and forwards or rotating the body.

Stupor

A condition where a person is immobile, mute, and unresponsive, but appears to be fully conscious because the eyes are open and follow the movement of external objects. (See Catatonic Behaviour.)

Tardive Dyskinesia

An occasional reaction to medication, usually after prolonged usage. Characterized by abnormal, spasmodic, involuntary movements of the tongue, jaw, trunk, or limbs. (See Extrapiramidal Symptoms.)

Thought Alienation

This term refers to the belief that thoughts have been stolen from one's mind. Also known as thought withdrawal.

Thought Broadcasting

This term refers to the belief that one's thoughts are being made known to others, usually through the radio or television.

Thought Disorder

A symptom of severe mental illnesses. Thoughts may be slow to form, or come extra fast, or not at all. The person may jump from topic to topic, seem confused, or have difficulty making simple decisions. Thinking may be coloured by delusions—false beliefs that have no logical basis. Some people also feel they are being persecuted—convinced they are being spied on or plotted against. They may have grandiose delusions or think they are all-powerful, capable of anything, and invulnerable to danger. They may also have a strong religious drive, or believe they have a personal mission to right the wrongs of the world. (See Delusions.)

Thought Insertion

This term refers to the belief that thoughts are being put into one's mind.

Topectomy

A procedure where there is a surgical removal of a small and specific part of the brain in the treatment of mental illness. Surgery is generally limited to cases where medications and other treatment methods have not been effective.

Torticollis (tor-ti-kol-is)

A contraction of one or more of the neck muscles on one side, resulting in an abnormal position of the head. Also called wry neck. (See Dystonia.)

Tranquilizer (tran-kwih-li-zer)

A medicine which produces a calming effect. The so-called major tranquilizers are used to treat serious mental disorders; the minor tranquilizers are often used to treat anxiety.

Standard Antipsychotics/Typical Antipsychotics

Older, first generation medications used to treat serious mental illness. Standard antipsychotics differ from the atypical antipsychotics in that they seldom have an effect upon the negative symptoms and often result in greater incidences of EPS in patients. The most notable examples include haloperidol and chlorpromazine. (See Antipsychotics, Medications.)

Undifferentiated Type Schizophrenia

Categorized by the fact that symptoms of schizophrenia are present, but the individual does not meet criteria for specific schizophrenia types such as

paranoid, disorganized, or catatonic. This is a subtype of schizophrenia.

Ventricles (ven-trih-kals)

These are four fluid-filled chambers in the brain which form a network with the spinal cord.

SOURCES:

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