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Free access link:

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8447694/pdf/13643_2021_Article_1798.pdf

Article Overview:
This systematic review aimed to describe observational studies that examine signs of deterioration in the mental and physical health of young people with serious mental illnesses.
The systematic review included 5 studies.

Sample: young patients (15-30 years old) with serious mental illness including schizophrenia, major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder and other related psychotic disorders.

Key take home messages:

1. There is a lack of studies in this area. Of those that are published limitations include – poor overall quality, small sample sizes and different statistical analyses performed. Most studies were observational studies.

2. Two indicators of mental health deterioration were identified:

   - Cognitive functioning (decline, worsening and poor school/academic performance)
   - Expressed emotion status (based on how the relatives spontaneously talk about the patient.)

   Worsening cognitive function and expressed emotion status could indicate relapse in young patients with SMI, but larger sample sizes are needed.

3. Worsening cognitive functioning and expressed emotion status significantly predicted medication non-adherence and relapse respectively. However, a decline in cognitive functioning (poor academic performance) was not found to significantly correlate to deaths by suicide.

4. Detecting signs as early as possible, in those without a diagnosis, can lead to more timely and appropriate interventions, reducing the need for lengthy psychiatric hospital stays, and improving serious outcomes (self-harm and suicide).

5. Need for further research on signs of deterioration in young people with serious mental illnesses, as well as research into the effectiveness of passive monitoring using technology (e.g. sleep-wake cycle, physical activity, phone usage).