Can Schizophrenia be Treated?

Some early treatments for schizophrenia included:
- Insulin coma therapy
- Prefrontal lobotomy
- Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)

How about a pill?

- **Neuroleptics** (anti-psychotics) were help people with schizophrenia think more clearly and reduce or eliminate hallucinations and delusions.

  - Reduce the positive symptoms but are less effective in controlling the negative and disorganized symptoms (Potkin et al., 1993).

Antipsychotic Medications

- These are the most commonly prescribed for people with schizophrenia, as well as anti-depressants or mood stabilizers.

  - Approximately 50-70% of patients will show improvement to some degree.
Non-compliance with meds

- Despite the effectiveness of antipsychotic medications, many patients are not compliant with taking the medication.
  - Approximately 7% of patients prescribed antipsychotic medication refuse to take it (Hoge et al., 1990).

- Research shows that 3 out of 4 patients stop taking their medication from time to time (Weiden et al., 1991).

WHY do patients refuse medication?

- There are a number of factors that influence non-compliance:
  - Negative side effects that produce unwanted physical symptoms
  - Negative patient–doctor relationships
  - Costs of medication
  - Poor social support

- Hopefully compliance rates will improve with the introduction of injectable medications, rather than taking oral medication.

What are the risks?

- These drugs impact neurotransmitter systems, which produce more serious, extrapyramidal symptoms.
  - These symptoms include motor difficulties similar to those experienced by patients with Parkinson’s disease (Parkinsonian symptoms)
Extrapyramidal Symptoms

- **Tardive Dyskinesia** produces involuntary movements of the tongue, face and mouth.
  - These present as protrusions of the tongue, puffing of the cheeks, puckering of the mouth and chewing movements.
  - This results from long-term use of antipsychotics and is irreversible.

New medications

- Since the 1990’s new medications help those who did not respond to earlier antipsychotic medications and they tend to have fewer side effects (Davis, et al., 2003).
  - Most commonly prescribed:
    - Clozapine
    - Risperdone
    - Olanzapine

What are the alternatives?

- Patients often fail to return to clinics and hospitals for follow-up, which make psychosocial interventions a necessity in treatment.
  - Traditional therapy
  - Behavioral family therapy
  - Vocational rehabilitation
  - Self-advocacy
  - Psychosocial clubs
Wrap it up...

- There are many treatments for this disorder, but because it is such a complex one treatment must be carried out at all levels.
- One approach alone is not sufficient to address the many needs of people with schizophrenia.

Next Class...

- We will discuss treatments for schizophrenia.