

A paper published in the American Journal of Psychiatry found that up to 40% of patients receiving treatment for first-episode psychosis at community mental health facilities could benefit from a change in medication treatment at a time in the illness when it is most important. The authors found that guidelines for first-episode psychosis are not the same as those for multi-episodes psychosis. Current recommendations state that patients with first-episode psychosis should receive low doses of antipsychotic medications along with strategies to mitigate bothersome side-effects that could contribute to medication non-adherence.

The authors found that among the 404 patients who received treatment for first-episode psychosis at community mental health centers show that:

- 8.8% were prescribed antipsychotics at higher doses than recommended,
- 23.3% were prescribed multiple antipsychotics,
- 36.5% were prescribed both an antipsychotic and an antidepressant when an antidepressant seemed unnecessary,
- 10.1% were prescribed psychotropic medications without an antipsychotic,
- 1.2% were prescribed stimulant medications, and
- 32.1% were prescribed olanzapine, which is not recommended for patients with first-episode psychosis.

Some 159 patients or 39.4% could benefit from a review and change in their medication. The study encourages additional education for clinicians.

Reference for this important study is:

Robinson DG, Schooler NR, John M, et al. Prescription Practices in the Treatment of First-Episode Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders: Data From the National RAISE-ETP Study. The American Journal of Psychiatry. 2014 Dec 4.[Epub ahead of print].