Late-onset schizophrenia: a review

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Abstract

Introduction: Although schizophrenia is generally regarded as an illness with onset in late adolescence or early adult life, a sizeable minority of patients first become ill in middle or old age. Inconsistencies in diagnostic systems and nomenclature have led to such cases occupying an ambiguous position in relation to schizophrenia.

Objectives: The concept, nosological status, diagnostic and associated clinical features involved in late-onset schizophrenia are reviewed.

Methods: A literature review of the theme is surveyed. Several articles were search on MEDLINE with the key-words: late-onset schizophrenia, very late-onset schizophrenia AND late-onset psychosis.

Results and Conclusions: In terms of epidemiology, symptom profile, and identified pathophysiology, the diagnosis of late-onset schizophrenia (illness onset after 40 years of age) has face validity and clinical utility. General adoption of this category will foster systematic investigation of such patients.