

DISRUPTED TRAJECTORIES: PATIENT AND FAMILY PERSPECTIVES ON EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM RECOVERY FOR FIRST EPISODE PSYCHOSIS

Aleksandra Bacewicz, MD, MPH
University of Washington
Seattle, WA

Background: Individuals are most likely to experience first episode psychosis in their early 20s. It is during this developmental period (emerging adulthood) that individuals are tasked with continuing identity exploration in multiple domains. The convergence of first episode psychosis with this developmental stage suggests there is especially prominent disruption in individuals' life trajectories if derailed by severe mental illness and a corresponding significant impact of interventions during this period.

Aims: This qualitative study aims to understand patient circumstances and recovery 2-4 years after completion of OnTrack programs in New York and Tennessee, respectively.

Methods: Researchers conducted 18 semi-structured interviews with patients/ families to shed light on patient experiences, both during and after the program. Thematic analyses were conducted on the data, revealing disruption in the realms of school/work, independent living, and relationships during and after program enrollment.

Results: Disruption of life trajectories and incomplete recovery were the overarching themes among the experiences presented. Social disruption during school age years was common, leading to the loss of one's peer group and extracurricular activities, furthering patients' social isolation. For those who were able to return to educational pursuits, there were myriad challenges in succeeding, including feeling out of place with younger students and the effects of their mental illness on their ability to focus. There was a diminishment of social relationships after FEP, as having had a severe mental health event led to estrangement. Many demonstrated difficulty with fully independent living, often continuing to live with family for support.

Discussion: These results suggest that early intervention programs can aid in recovery but do not fully rehabilitate individuals to engage in schooling, employment, social engagement and independent living. More information about longer term outcomes in patients who complete early intervention programs can encourage the understanding of patient-centered outcomes and consequently inform program reform.

Full List of Authors

Aleksandra Bacewicz, MD, MPH, Nev Jones PhD

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Identify the major ways in which patients' lives are disrupted in the realms of school/work, relationships, and independent living after experiencing first episode psychosis, during and after intensive intervention
2. Integrate understanding of disrupted patient trajectories into a developmental framework for patients who experience first episode psychosis