

PRESS RELEASE 新聞稿

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Hospital Authority's E.A.S.Y. Programme

3-Year Efforts Proven Effective to Encourage Early Treatment for Early Psychosis

The Hospital Authority (HA) has launched the E.A.S.Y. Programme (Early Assessment Service for Young People with Psychosis) since 2001. It provides extensive public education, referral and treatment services to raise the public awareness on early psychosis so that young people with the problem can be identified and referred for treatment at an early stage, which significantly improves the treatment outcomes.

Better Outcomes with Early Treatment

Since launching of the Programme, 2,806 of 3,513 referred cases are confirmed to be early psychosis. The case analyses show that **85% can be recovered in a six-month period if their symptoms are identified and treated at an early stage. The symptoms including confused thoughts, delusions and hallucinations will therefore subside.** After a one-year treatment, **their confidence will be boosted and social life will be enriched,** which may bring about **substantial improvement in their quality of life.**

Shortening of the "Duration of Untreated Psychosis (DUP)"

The research findings revealed that public awareness of early psychosis has been raised so that young people with the problem can be identified early, further shortening the duration of being untreated — "Duration of Untreated Psychosis (DUP)". According to the data analysis from 2001 to 2004, **the DUP has been reduced from 513 days to 320 days on average.** Shortening of DUP means people can be treated early so that **the disruption of psychosis episode to their daily life is greatly reduced; early treatment would require less medication dosage;** and treatment outcomes can be improved in the long run. In addition, adolescence is an important stage of growth and development. Shortening of the DUP can help to **reduce the far-reaching consequences of early psychosis on the personality and psychosocial development of young people.**

Shortening of the DUP by continuous health education

The research findings concluded that the reasons of presence of DUP as follows:

- 1) Due to a lack of understanding of early psychosis, potential referrers (e.g. parents, friends, etc) are unable to identify the symptoms, resulting in delays in seeking help and referral;
- 2) Lack of “insight” among young people with early psychosis;
- 3) Taboo of seeking help from psychiatric professionals which hinders referral and treatment.

In view of the above problems, some people with early psychosis sought help from the Accident & Emergency Service only when their conditions deteriorated. From the data analysis, about 38% of the cases was referred through the E.A.S.Y. Hotline which is the most direct and immediate way of referral. It is hoped that people with early psychosis can be referred through the hotline, thereby further shortening the DUP.

Detecting of suspected cases by paying extra attention to young people

Among the target group (i.e. young people aged 15 to 25) of the E.A.S.Y. Programme, the 15 to 19 age group is accounted for 40% of the confirmed cases. Young people aged from 15 to 19 are studying at secondary school. If their close contacts such as teachers, social workers, family members or classmates, can identify their symptoms at an earlier stage, they can be referred and treated earlier.

Dr. Dicky Chung, consultant doctor of the E.A.S.Y. Programme, said, “Seeking treatment at an early stage shows better results and minimizes the disruption to the patients’ daily life. Early psychosis if not managed well at an early stage, may develop into serious mental diseases. Patients may take a longer period to recover and may stand a lower chance of going back to a normal life. As in previous years, the Hospital Authority strives to enhance public awareness of early psychosis; and enhance communication and co-operation with other social service organizations to encourage referral of cases, thereby enabling patients to receive early treatment.”

Background of E.A.S.Y. Programme

Early psychosis is an abnormal mental state. The thoughts and feelings of people with early psychosis are often out of touch with reality. Other common features of early psychosis include confused thoughts, delusions and hallucinations.

The E.A.S.Y. Programme has been launched by the Hospital Authority since 2001 with two components: public education; and assessment and treatment for young people with early psychosis. **An E.A.S.Y. hotline 29-283-283, a website (www.ha.org.hk/easy)** and four service centres have been set up for public enquiries and referral of cases. The Hospital Authority will also conduct extensive public education campaigns through the mass media and organize talks and workshops for social workers, teachers, doctors, parents and the general public.

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