

Abstract

Objective: Late-onset functional psychosis refers to all primary functional psychosis with age of onset at or above 45. This study described the diagnostic subtypes, premorbid characteristics, clinical and psychosocial outcomes, and any possible predictor of outcomes in late-onset functional psychosis in Hong Kong Chinese in-patients.

Method: Sixty-seven in-patients, who were 45 or above at the first onset of functional psychosis in 1997 and 1998, were identified from case records. Follow-up interviews were carried out for 56 patients four to five years after the index admission with standardized instruments for outcomes. Comparison of premorbid characteristics, clinical and psychosocial outcome variables among the subtypes was made. Multiple linear regression was used to identify any clinical and psychosocial outcome predictor in each subtype of late-onset functional psychosis.

Results: Decline in psychosocial functioning was consistently observed in all the subtypes of late-onset functional psychosis over a period of four to five years. The premorbid traits of paranoid or schizoid personality, limited social contacts, low social

classes and low level of education were overrepresented in schizophrenia and delusional disorder. Schizophrenia was the predominant diagnosis in late-onset functional psychosis. It had the worst clinical and psychosocial outcomes in nearly all domains. In both schizophrenia and delusional disorder, those subjects who had more frequent premorbid social contacts predicted a better preserved social contact. In schizophrenia, those subjects with greater amount of time in employment predicted a higher percentage of time in employment at follow-up. A later age of onset predicted a longer further hospitalization for schizophrenia. A younger age of onset predicted a higher percentage of time in employment for delusional disorder.

Conclusions: The study of outcome predictors in late-onset functional psychosis gave insight for service planning such as social intervention and rehabilitation. Prospective study to investigate the long-term outcome and predictors of late-onset functional psychosis in local population will be the topic for future research.

Key words: late-onset functional psychosis, premorbid, psychosocial characteristics, outcomes, predictors.