

Abstract

Background: Poor subjective perception of illness (insight) is a common feature of patients suffering from schizophrenia. Patients with better subjective perception of illness are likely to exhibit better drug compliance and hence enjoy better prognosis. Better subjective perception of illness was once found to have shorter length of hospitalization but there was no recent evidence in this area. There was a big gap in recent research about the relationship between subjective perception of illness and length of hospitalization in patients admitted for acute schizophrenic episode.

Objectives: This study aimed (1) to explore the relationship between subjective perception of illness (insight) with length of hospitalization, (2) to assess the change of subjective perception of illness during in-patient period, (3) to further examine the relationship between the change of subjective perception of illness and length of hospitalization (LOH) in Chinese patients suffering from schizophrenia.

Patients and Methods: One hundred and fifty-three in-patients suffering from schizophrenia admitted to the psychiatric observation unit of Tai Po Hospital between November, 2011 and May, 2012 were recruited consecutively. All patients were interviewed upon admission and before discharge (or 60 days after admission). Subjective perception of illness was assessed using the Scale to Assess Unawareness of Mental Disease (SUMD), Psychosis Recovery Inventory (PRI) and Drug Attitude Inventory (DAI-10). The relationship between change of subjective perception of illness and length of hospitalization (LOH) was explored.

Results: Subjective perception of illness assessed by SUMD, violence risk, psychopathology, employment and legal status were predictive of around 36% of variance for LOH of patients with schizophrenia ($R^2=0.36$). There was a statistically significant change of SUMD ($Z=-3.61$, $p<0.001$), PRI ($Z=-2.73$, $p=0.006$) and DAI-10 ($Z=-5.56$, $p<0.001$) during in-patient period. Change of SUMD was not associated with LOH ($Z=-1.916$, $p=0.055$).

Conclusion: Subjective perception of illness upon admission affects LOH in Chinese patients suffering from schizophrenia. Assessment of subjective perception of illness may be useful in predicting the duration of LOH. Interventions of subjective perception of illness may be helpful in determining optimal period for acute inpatient treatment.

Keywords: subjective perception of illness, insight, schizophrenia, length of hospitalization