

Abstract

Background: Dissociative experiences are common in patients with schizophrenia.

There is evidence suggesting that dissociative experiences are related to symptoms of schizophrenia and history of childhood trauma. However, local data on the prevalence of dissociative experiences in patients with newly onset schizophrenia are lacking.

Objectives: This study aimed to determine the prevalence of self-reported dissociative experiences and to identify factors associated with self-reported dissociative experiences in terms of clinical characteristics and childhood trauma in patients with newly onset schizophrenia in early intervention (EI) service in Hong Kong (HK).

Method: This is a cross-sectional study conducted in a local EI clinic between November 2017 and April 2018. A consecutive sample of patients with newly onset schizophrenia was recruited. Socio-demographic and clinical data were collected. Self-reported dissociative experiences, childhood trauma, and schizophrenic symptoms were assessed with the use of Dissociative Experiences Scale (DES), Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ), and Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS) respectively. The prevalence of self-reported dissociative experiences in patients with

newly onset schizophrenia was delineated. Bivariate and multivariate analyses were undergone to identify factors associated with self-reported dissociative experiences in patients with newly onset schizophrenia.

Results: 173 patients with newly onset schizophrenia were recruited. 13.9% of patients had a high level of self-reported dissociative experiences. Positive symptoms of schizophrenia (odds ratio [OR] 1.154, 95% confidence interval [CI] 1.026-1.299, $p = 0.017$) and history of childhood emotional abuse (OR 1.196, 95% CI 1.071-1.334, $p = 0.001$) were significantly associated with self-reported dissociative experiences in patients with newly onset schizophrenia

Conclusion: Self-reported dissociative experiences are common in patients with newly onset schizophrenia. Those with a high level of self-reported dissociative experiences have more severe positive symptoms and childhood emotional abuse. Early identification of newly onset schizophrenia patients with significant self-reported dissociative experiences is of vital importance in offering appropriate treatment.

Keywords: dissociative experiences, prevalence, newly onset schizophrenia, childhood trauma