

## Abstract

### **Background:**

The identification of people at high risk of becoming psychotic within the near future creates opportunities for early intervention prior to the onset of psychosis to prevent or minimize later ill health. The present study set out to identify symptomatic young people with high likelihood of transition to psychosis within a follow up period of 6 months in our local population, and to determine the rate of transition to psychosis in this group.

### **Method:**

Symptomatic individuals with either a family history of psychotic disorder, sub-threshold psychotic symptoms or brief transient psychotic symptoms using operationalised criteria “at risk mental state” (*McGorry 1998, Yung 1996b*) were identified. The individuals were prospectively assessed on a monthly interval on measure of psychopathology for a period of 6 months.

**Results:**

Eighteen out of 62 people (29%) made the transition to frank psychosis within a 6-month follow up period with the majority occurring within 3 months. Also, significant differences were found in the intake Positive And Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS) general subscale and Comprehensive Assessment of At Risk Mental State (CAARMS) cognitive scores between the group that ultimately became psychotic and the group that did not. In the group that became psychotic, the results suggest that negative symptoms and functioning decline were present in an early stage of prodrome before the emergence of positive symptoms at a later stage.

**Conclusion and Clinical Implications:**

The period of highest risk of transition to psychosis was within the 3 months after study entry. Thus, in our outpatient clinic, those distressing youths who met the high risk criteria should therefore be monitored most closely in the initial 3 months, particularly in those individuals with high levels of psychopathology and functioning decline.