

Abstract

Background: Acute and transient psychotic disorder (ATPD) was reported to be an unstable diagnosis in a few western studies. Some of them suggested that the outcome of ATPD was good. This study evaluates the diagnostic stability and outcome of ATPD. In addition, this study also aims at finding the predictors of diagnostic stability and outcome.

Method: Fifty-six subjects consecutively admitted for in-patient treatment of ATPD from 1-7-97 to 31-12-98 were recruited into this study. Their demographic data, premorbid adjustment and other clinical variables were obtained from case notes. Follow up interviews were carried out for fifty-three subjects, and outcome was measured in different domains.

Results: ATPD was an unstable diagnosis in Chinese in-patients, with 37.7% having changes in diagnoses at a mean follow up period of 27.7 months. Those subjects with a stable diagnosis of ATPD had a very good outcome in both psychosocial and clinical aspect. The good predictors were: being married, high premorbid GAF score and younger age of onset. The presence of full schizophrenic symptoms at initial presentation predicted higher level of negative symptoms at follow up.

Conclusion: The findings in this study support the need of further validation of the concept of ATPD, as a portion of subjects evolved into more serious mental disorder. The predictors of outcome found in this study provide a base for further research.