

Case Report

Psychoeducation on Adherence to Treatment of Schizophrenia Patient During Covid-19 Pandemic Era

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Abstract

Background: The outbreak of Covid-19 is really disrupting people's thought and their ability to face the problem clearly and their mental health could be disturbed. They will go under their circumstance of fear, start to panic, and leads to poor decision making. This fear and anxiety could affect and lead to any negative behavioural changes of patients to the belief of being infected by avoiding going to the hospital as a source of contagion place.

Methods: Case study from an inward patient, adult woman that suffered from schizophrenia for more than 10 years and got injection of antipsychotic routinely once a month. During the early time of Covid-19 pandemic, the patient and her family are afraid of coming to the hospital to get her injection. After one month of not getting the injection, she started to relapse again and hospitalized for 10 days.

Results: The difficulty faced in handling this case is to provide an understanding of the patient and family about adherence on her continuity treatment. Therefore, by giving a psychoeducation using a telemedicine is considered to be the most suitable way to handle this patient to gain more insight about her willingness back to get the monthly treatment during the pandemic situation.

Keywords: Schizophrenia, Covid-19, Adherence of Treatment, Psychoeducation, Telemedicine, Telepsychiatry

Introduction

Schizophrenia is part of a psychotic disorder which is mainly characterized by a loss of understanding of reality and a loss of insight. ⁽¹⁾consisting of a complex, heterogeneous group of cognitive and behavioural syndromes, which may originate from brain development

disorder caused by genetic or environmental factors, or both. ⁽²⁾Schizophrenia occurs all over the world, affects about 1 percent of the global population that lasts along their life. ⁽³⁾

The incidence rate of Schizophrenia is about 1.5 per 10,000 people and the onset of people getting schizophrenia is around 18 to 25 years old for men and around 25-35 years old for women to be diagnosed with. ⁽⁴⁾

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According to Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5), there are specific criteria for schizophrenia over a period of 1 month such as delusions, hallucinations, unorganized speech, unorganized or catatonic behavior and

negative symptoms. ⁽⁵⁾Patients with schizophrenia also experience cognitive impairment like patients have poor performance to control their cognitive functions. ⁽⁶⁾

World Health Organization (WHO) declared that 2020 is a year of Coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19). The spreading of this virus contributed globally in just some weeks, the Covid-19 epidemic had spread to over 100 countries that matched to the definition of pandemic. ⁽⁷⁾

Coronavirus comes from a family of *Coronaviridae* virus and contains four structural proteins: spike (S), envelope (E), membrane (M) and nucleocapsid (N). The spike glycoprotein will infect the human body by attaching the membrane of the host cell and started to make symptoms like common cold or attack respiratory organ. This family of virus also responsible to the other global pandemic virus such as, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). ⁽⁸⁾

The mode of transmission of the Covid-19 virus is mainly spread via respiratory droplets. Basic reproduction number of the human transmission of Covid-19 is more contagious than other viruses such as SARS, MERS, H1N1 or Ebola and the value of reproduction number of Covid-19 reported is 3.6 compared to the other pandemic virus is 2.7. Thus, it proved that Covid-19 is highly contagious. This basic reproduction number could be reduced by encouraging people to restrict travel that are not essential and do the physical distancing. To prevent the spreading of Covid-19, people are asked to maintain their standard of hygiene. ⁽⁸⁾The public health authorities strongly advised people to wear a face mask wherever they go and do the physical distancing by not taking activities outside their houses if it is not very necessary during the outbreak. ⁽⁹⁾ Also, the government has done several non-pharmaceutical interventions by closing some places that people could gather in a large number, such as shopping centres, public areas, or restaurants. They also minimizing the office hours to minimize the spreading of the virus. ⁽¹⁰⁾

The outbreak of Covid-19 is really disrupting people's thought and their ability to face the problem clearly and their mental health could be disturbed. ⁽¹¹⁾ Their reaction could be varies, some believe their life is in a danger situation, some believe it is just a theory conspiracy or they will believe the misleading rumours. ⁽¹²⁾With this outbreak happens, most people will react with confusion and anxiety. They will go under their circumstance of fear, start to panic and leads to poor decision making. ⁽¹³⁾

People with fear of Covid-19 are afraid to go outside their house, especially people with poor mental health and living in region with high reported Covid-19 cases. Their ability to think clearly is disturbed so they will become afraid to go to the hospital and this will ruin their long-term treatment. ⁽¹⁴⁾The long-term medication and hospitalization for patients with psychotic symptoms could decrease their motivation. They take medication pills or get an injection day by day passively in the hospital in a long time aimlessly could lower their adherence of medication, especially in the patients with schizophrenia, they usually have a lower insight than other patients. It is difficult to gain an insight of the patient especially with schizophrenia about their adherence of medication and stay continue with her treatment.

This review is aimed to give a management to the patient with mental health illness during Covid-19. They have to be provided with a very clear about information, situation, strategies to face the unstable living condition in order to fulfil their treatment on time. ⁽¹⁵⁾Psychoeducation is one of the methods to improve the adherence of the treatment given to psychotic patients. ⁽¹⁶⁾

Case Report

The patient was a 28-year-old female. Patient was angry 2 days before admitted to the hospital. The patient was late getting the treatment because the patient was forbidden by her husband to come to the hospital for fear of the spread of the Covid-19 virus which was increasingly widespread. The patient could tell that

she was taken to the hospital because suddenly she could not control her anger, the patient felt unable to control her emotions so that the patient was angry both to her husband as well as to her mother, felt restless and slammed things nearby. She also could not sleep well for 2 days before being admitted to the hospital, became restless and paced around the house. She was taken by his family to the emergency room Dr. Soetomo General Hospital Surabaya because her mother saw the patient getting angry and agitated. The patient also said that she was the Guardian of God to save the world that was currently sick and through her, the patient wanted to prevent human from going into hell. The patient also said that she had many similarities with famous Indonesian artists.

The patient said she had to go home soon because the patient has many thousands of employees who are waiting for her to return to work. She said that currently she was working on the making of protective gown project in the Covid-19 pandemic season and had donated a large set of them to many hospitals in East Java that made her contacted directly by the president and given a grand prize of Holy pilgrimage program in 2025. The President contacted patients through direct message on Instagram. She also heard a whispering voice that emerge clearly in the left ear which says that the voice of whisper said that the patient must die, the patient feels that the voice is the voice of the devil and she did not know before. Besides that, she also heard a different whispering voice that arises from her right ear. The voice from the right ear says that the patient is in good health, and the voice that the patient believed that the voice came from of a good genie and wants to save the patient. These sounds appeared continuously in turn at any time during the last 2 days before being admitted to the hospital and disappear when the patient closed her ears. Because these sounds often disturb the patient and make the patient confused and ultimately made the patient unable to control her emotions and the patient became angry.

The patient first experienced a mental disorder since she was in the high school. At that time, she often got

bullying by her classmates. Since then, she often had become frightened, often seeing the shadow of the devil and heard of whispering genie. She had previously been treated at Menur Mental Hospital for more than 10 times inpatient care because of her mental illness. She had been hospitalized in Psychiatric Ward Dr Soetomo General Hospital 2 times, in 2015 and 2017. Patients routinely got Fluphenazine 25 milligram injection via intramuscular since 2016 and routine given to her every 1 month. The patient never had any serious illness that brought her to the hospitalized. She never had any problems with any substance abuse or using any drugs before and never had smoking any cigarettes.

The patient was diagnosed with Schizophrenia Disorder because her symptoms met the diagnosis of criteria such as unorganized speech, grandiose and bizarre idea, delusion, and hallucinations that persists one month. During hospitalized, patient got several psychopharmacological, Trifluoperazine 2x5mg tablet orally every 12 hour, Depakote 2x250mg tablet orally every 12 hour and Lorazepam 1x1mg tablet orally every 24 hours. For 10 days treatment of psychopharmacology given orally, the patient wet showed better progress of her clinical status. She got injection of Fluphenazine 25 milligram intramuscular again after she was discharged from the hospital.

Discussion

Covid-19 is causing high morbidity and mortality and most of the governments has decided to lockdown almost all the nation's aspect including economics and politics. People are not able to go to work anymore, many people loses their job and these situations make people started to worry and become fear of their future. (17,18)

The fear and anxiety of being infected to the Covid-19 has increased more since people are exposed to the digital media platform (news, broadcast message, some influencer's thought, rumoured news), their perception of facing the pandemic and their obsessive thought of being less control from preventing the virus. Having heard about the increasing number of mortality

of Covid-19 made people confused to do their plan and did not want to work and do activities like they usually did.^(19,20) This fear and anxiety could affect and lead to any negative behavioural changes of patients to the belief of being infected by avoiding going to the hospital as a source of contagion place.^(21,22) This condition could disrupt patient's understanding and decision-making to keep on their treatment program.⁽²³⁾

The adherence of treatment depends on the patient's willingness to receive and keep following the doctor's suggestions. There are many types of the incompliance of treatment that patients usually do like, not using the doctor's prescribed as advised, the patients missed the appointments and not attending the follow up sessions.⁽²⁴⁾

Bad adherence of treatment is the main cause of relapse of the disease and increasing patient's frequent hospitalized. Education to the patient's insight really could help minimize the relapse and recurrence of the patient's disease so does minimize the treatment cost. Medical employees here, including doctors, nurses and other hospital staffs need to give psychoeducation to the patient for being aware of their illness and know their symptoms further.⁽²⁴⁾ Besides, the medical staffs are required to give a nice, improved and secured hospital environment especially during the pandemic so it expected to reduce the patient's fear to come to the hospital.⁽²⁵⁾

The Intervention of psychoeducation for patients with schizophrenia disorders shows some improvements outcome to the patient especially for very long-term inward patient. A Good psychoeducation from a doctor will determines a great improvement in some areas of their knowledge and adherence to their psychiatric medication to ensure that their ongoing medication after discharge from the hospital. It will become very important to every doctor to give an explainable psychoeducation to the patient and family about the diagnosis and the following treatment.⁽¹⁶⁾

Medical staffs here need to gain concern about delivering active psychological and psychiatric

intervention for those who needs help during this pandemic era of Covid-19. We are all cannot just sit and wait until this pandemic over. The long-term treatment of psychotic inward patients must go-on and telepsychiatry and use of digital media believed could be used helping the treatment to continue during this era.⁽²⁶⁾

Telemedicine is one of the healthcare services methods that gives solution of bringing healthcare service within distance between patients and doctors especially during the pandemic era, using digital media technologies involving information and communication. In the psychiatry department, this service known as Telepsychiatry.⁽²⁷⁾

Telemedicine is an interesting tool for psychiatrist because psychiatric care is not necessary to meet the patients physically. The verbal and visual assessment could be easily done via telepsychiatry. Doctor and patient could face to face directly via their digital media platform such as, laptop, tablet and phones without any restrictions.⁽²⁸⁾ They are only having to switch on their camera during the consultation so rapport and expressed face could be obtained and helping doctor to determine their treatment. This service is very useful for both patients and doctors during this pandemic because doctors can still provide assistance and treatment to patient in a distance while still maintain to minimize the risk of spreading infection of Covid-19.⁽²⁷⁾

Even telepsychiatry sounds especially useful to the psychiatrist to continue giving the psychiatric care during the pandemic but telepsychiatry also have some difficulties that both doctor and patients feel. Doctors feel that using this technology they hard to detect non-verbal cues during their videoconference also they could not build the relationship between doctors and patients as good as they meet directly.⁽²⁷⁾

The needs of telepsychiatry to the inward patient is giving the supportive psychotherapy and psychoeducation by phone or video during the pandemic and to follow up the condition of the patient.⁽²⁹⁾ One of the aims of giving psychoeducation to this patient by telepsychiatry is to gain more insight about patient's willingness to

get the monthly treatment. Long-acting injection of antipsychotics that given to the patient is every 4 weeks. Compared to the oral antipsychotics, proven that long acting injection have more stability in the blood system, more consistent bioavailability and more predictable on adherence treatment and also have lower rate of relapse. (30) This patient was getting better condition since she got long-acting injection of antipsychotics. She never relapsed again of her disorder and always got her long-acting injection once a month from 2018 until 2020. Because of her family's fear of Covid-19, her adherence getting bad and relapse again. By giving right choice of psychoeducation that is telepsychiatry to this patient, from the moment she was discharged from the hospital and always encouraging and reminding she and her family to keep on her medication by taking long-acting injection on the in ward clinic every month and doctor gives the consultation via videoconference to minimize her time in the hospital during time of injection.

Conclusion

Patients with chronic schizophrenia disorder that had a treatment with long-acting injection antipsychotics must have a good adherence of obeying the procedure of treatment to stabilize their conditions. There are some psychosocial interventions that recommended, one of them that suggested is psychoeducation. A combination of giving a long-acting treatment and psychoeducation intervention for patients with schizophrenia disorder will improve the patient's condition especially for very long-term in ward patient. During the era of Covid-19, many people are afraid of coming to the hospital like they usually did it before. This is a normal situation, but medical staffs must gain their concerns to the continuation of patient's treatment. Telemedicine is one of the healthcare services methods that gives solution of bringing healthcare service within distance between patients and doctors especially during the pandemic era by using the digital media technologies.

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