

General Practice Guide

SYMPTOMS OF PSYCHOSIS

The following questions are phrased in a way most likely to help you elicit psychosis if present.

Sometimes people have experiences that other people can't really understand. For example, that the radio or TV are referring to you, that there are hidden messages in things around you or that things around are strange in some way. Is this happening for you?

Delusions of
reference

Sometimes people hear noises or voices when no one is speaking and there is nothing to explain what they are hearing? Do you ever have something like that happening? If yes, what do they say? How many are there? Do they seem to be having a conversation among themselves about you? Do they comment on what you are doing?

Hallucinations

Do you believe someone is trying to hurt you or plot against you? Or that there any conspiracies that involve you? Are you frightened?

Persecutory ideas

Is anything interfering with your thinking? Some people feel as if thoughts are being put into their heads that are not their own. Do you ever feel that your thoughts are broadcast out loud so that other people can hear what you are thinking,...feel that thoughts are being taken out of your head against your will?

Thought
alienation/
thought
broadcasting

REFERRAL PROCESS

A patient with any yes responses to the above questions OR you suspect psychosis based on your clinical intuition may benefit from a second opinion from your local community mental health service. Refer in the usual way.

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SYMPTOMS OF “AT RISK”

It is more difficult to identify the “at risk” (prodromal) symptoms of psychosis because “at risk” symptoms are non-specific. Some guide questions for common “at risk” symptoms are

Have you felt that things happening around you have a special meaning just for you? Have you ever found yourself feeling mistrustful or suspicious of other people? Do you sense something strange might be happening?

Unusual Ideas/
Suspiciousness

Do you ever feel that your mind is playing tricks on you? For instance, do you ever think you hear sounds and then realise that there is probably nothing there?

Perceptual
abnormalities

Do you usually prefer to be alone or with others? What do you usually do with your free time? Has there been a change in your socialising?

Social
Withdrawal

Does your work take more effort than it used to? Have you been doing worse in school or at work? Are you been having a harder time getting normal daily activities done?

Deterioration in
School/Work/Self

Have you had difficulty concentrating or being able to focus on a task like reading or watching TV? Is this getting worse than it was before?

Concentration

Have you had thoughts of harming yourself or ending your life? Have you ever attempted suicide? Have you had thoughts of harming anyone else?

Suicidal
Thinking

REFERRAL PROCESS

Keeping a watching brief on such symptoms is important. If they are persistent and unexplained or involve suicidal thinking refer for a specialist opinion through your local community mental health service.