

KEY:

Speaker No. 1 – Bill Pollock

Speaker No. 2 – Dr. Danelle Hupp

Transcript

Speaker 1

And we're back on Show Me Today, the voice of Missouri. Early psychosis can be frightening and confusing for families, especially when the warning signs look similar to normal teenage behavior. But experts say recognizing those early signs and getting help quickly can dramatically improve long-term outcomes. EPC Missouri is working across the state to connect young people and their families with coordinated specialty care, a team-based approach that provides therapy, family supports, and education. Dr. Danelle Hupp joins us to talk about what families should watch for and how early support can make a life-changing difference. Dr. Hupp, appreciate you joining us. When we talk about early psychosis, what exactly does that term mean? And why is catching it so important, especially early on?

Speaker 2

Wonderful. Well, thank you so much for having me on to talk about this really important topic, both first episode and the role, the critical role that families really do play in treatment and recovery related to first episode psychosis. So I'm glad to get information out there about, you know, what's happening, things to look for, and then what to do with that information. And so, you know, when families are knowledgeable, and they are appropriately supportive, they can truly have a positive impact on recovery and not just for the individual experiencing the first impact, the first episode of psychosis, but on the whole family system as well. And so when you're thinking about a first episode of psychosis, so that refers to the first experiences someone has with symptoms of psychosis. So oftentimes in these early phases, the person that's experiencing these things doesn't really understand what's happening. They don't have a lot of awareness about what's happening, but they oftentimes will feel like something is strange or something is unusual. But it can affect people from all walks of life, and it typically begins when a person's in their late teens to mid-20s, so thinking about that college age. But it can be earlier, from earlier teens to late 30s. And then typically you'll start to see the symptoms of first episode psychosis emerge earlier in males, like late teens, early 20s, than in females who are

typically early 20s to early 30s when they're experiencing first episode psychosis. And you know, it's not always easy to spot the early signs because these signs can be indicative of multiple things. It could be, you know, somebody is withdrawing from friends and that could be just typical teenage human behavior where you need some space, that could be something, you know, related to depression or social anxiety all the way up to a first episode of psychosis. So it can be really difficult to differentiate in these early stages what is a true first episode of psychosis. But some of the earliest signs that an individual will experience and that families and other people in their lives will notice are withdrawing socially or starting to isolate. They might be having these sensory experiences that are atypical or other people aren't experiencing. So they're hearing or seeing or believing things that really others aren't able to understand. A lot of times you'll start to see changes in their sleep, in their hygiene, even in their eating habits. Sometimes they'll become fearful or they'll be really reluctant to leave the house or to go to school or work or to attend events that they used to enjoy. And really sometimes these odd or bizarre actions and behaviors are sometimes the things that they say. They might be a little bit secretive, which may be unusual for them, because they're feeling a little bit of anxiety. And, you know, especially things that are a noticeable change, if you're seeing these changes in multiple areas, or if there's anything of concern. So, you know, it's not necessarily one thing in isolation, but when you're starting to see some of these things that we talked about in various places or areas of their life or a different context. So at school and at home or at work, or if the change is significant, these are sometimes assigned to us early on that something may be going on and it might be time to seek out some help.

Speaker 1

Dr. Hupp, you really explaining it well. I think when people first hear first episode, They think that, bam, here it is. Oh, boy, that's what it is. But this sounds like this happens over a length of time. It's kind of a slow process. Is that right? Is that fair to say?

Speaker 2

Yes. Yeah, absolutely. I'm so glad that you mentioned that. So there's typically a period of months to even years where, you know, hindsight is always 20/20. And so I think a lot of times families, especially parents, will start to blame themselves that they think they missed something. But a lot of times you'll just start seeing small symptoms, small behavioral changes that start to either increase in severity or start to occur in multiple contexts, or they start experiencing or demonstrating more of these things that we were talking about. And then, and so that's what we call the prodrome period, but that can last for months to years before somebody experiences their first true episode of psychosis.

Speaker 1

Dr. Danelle Hupp is joining us. She works with family support in early psychosis, and this is a part of our segment with EPC Missouri. You hear about the importance of reducing the duration of untreated psychosis. How can families help shorten that timeline and improve outcomes?

Speaker 2

Yeah, absolutely. So, you know, like we mentioned before, it's not always easy or clear to identify, especially in these earlier stages. So, you know, something that I think can be really helpful to shorten that duration of untreated psychosis is just to have a watchful eye and knowing what you're looking for. So those signs that we talked about, you know, if somebody is having an unusual experience, even if they're not fully convinced that it's real, especially if they're in distress because they know something is off or unusual, that's something that's a great time to reach out because that's what, you know, sometimes it's referred to the pro term or sometimes it's even there if somebody that clinical high risk for psychosis. So they might have a genetic predisposition and then they're starting to have these unusual experiences that are worrisome to them. And so the earlier we can intervene and identify those moments, the better. I think the other thing that, you know, families really do is talk to other people, you know, who knows them best, you know, coaches, teachers, things like that to see if the shift is occurring or observations are being made in other contexts outside of the home. You know, the National Alliance on Mental Illness or NAMI is a wonderful organization and they have family members with lived experience who have been in these exact shoes. So sometimes reaching out to an organization like NAMI and just saying, you know, these are the things that I'm observing. Is that where you were, you know, when this first started happening to you? But I think when in doubt seeking out screening, there are special, you know, tools that we can see and sort of try to start to identify where if somebody is falling on that continuum because it is something that occurs slowly over time. And so seeking out screening so that you can intervene as early as possible, it's really critical to shorten that duration of untreated psychosis.

Speaker 1

Can you tell us a little bit more about coordinated specialty care, Dr. Hupp.

Speaker 2

Yeah, so coordinated specialty care for first episode psychosis is an evidence-based approach. to provide services to individuals living with a first episode of psychosis. And so it really intends to wrap around that person and their support for their family so that they

have access to not just medication, because medication is oftentimes a piece of the puzzle, but it's not the be all end all. And so making sure they're connected with case management, making sure they have access to somebody to help them remain in or get back to school or work. ensuring that they do have somebody on the team that they can connect with and talk with for counseling and making sure that family is plugged in to those services as well. And so that is the essence of coordinated specialty care. And it's wonderful that Missouri has four really strong teams throughout your state.

Speaker 1

The 2026 Early Psychosis Care Conference is happening the 24th and 25th at the Sheridan Downtown at Crown Center. And you can register by going to the website, epcmissouri.org. Dr. Hupp, have you attended this event before in the past? And are you heading there this year?

Speaker 2

Yeah, absolutely. So I was able to join them last year and I will be back again this year talking about all things related to families within first episode psychosis. So I'd love to have some of your. your listeners there this year to join us. It really is for everyone that's involved. So providers, professionals that are working with individuals with early psychosis, those who are experiencing early psychosis and their family members. And you also have an opportunity to see presentations by researchers and interact with students who are going into this field. So it's a really wonderful blend of different areas that are coming together. And so it's a wonderful conference. I think this is their.

Speaker 1

What message do you want families to hear about hope and recovery when it comes to early psychosis?

Speaker 2

I would love families to know that recovery happens and really now it is the expectation. It is no longer the exception to the rule. So, you know, those living with, they're experiencing a first episode of psychosis, the expectation is they are enjoying life, their lives, they are finishing school, they are graduating from college, they have special interests, they have relationships, they're in, you know, have a meaningful job, they are independent, and, you know, It's programs like coordinated specialty care for first episode of psychosis that ensures that this is the expectation for folks living with a first episode of psychosis.

Speaker 1

The website again is epcmissouri.org. Dr. Danelle Hupp, thank you so much.

Speaker 2

Thank you. Thank you for the time. Appreciate it.

Speaker 1

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