

Schizophrenia in Malaysia : Clinical and Research foci

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In the last 2 years the Ministry of Health has set up as a registry on schizophrenia in Kuala Lumpur. About 4,000 patients have been registered by the registry both new and follow-ups.

While the data collected have been mainly socio-demographic, our research group has produced some data on first episode psychosis. Definition for 'age at onset' of first episode psychosis is controversial – for purposes of this study we have taken 'age at first contact with psychiatric services' although a better definition would be 'age of onset +' duration of untreated psychosis taken as 'age at presentation'. Our group intends to explore these areas and to investigate 'age of presentation' and its relationship to risk factors for schizophrenia.

Currently many others groups are involved in clinical trials using the newer atypical drugs which are funded by multinational drug companies. Other areas of research done by our groups includes psychosis in the community which has a sample size of 4,111 sampled from 5 different states in the country. Psychosis rate only accounts for less than 1% and even with using the CISR and SCAN it was not easy to differentiate the different diagnostic categories for psychosis.

Students undergoing the postgraduate psychiatry programme carry out small research projects often describing patients with schizophrenia, side effects of medication, admission practices, referral patterns and others but these are not the foci for future research. Some data on the initial results of our first episode psychosis data is presented here.