Psychological approaches to understanding and promoting recovery in psychosis and bipolar disorder: a mixed-methods approach

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Declared competing interests of authors: none

Published May 2016
DOI: 10.3310/pgfar04050

Plain English summary

Recovery in psychosis and bipolar disorder
Programme Grants for Applied Research 2016; Vol. 4: No. 5
DOI: 10.3310/pgfar04050

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Plain English summary

Psychosis (including disorders such as schizophrenia, which are characterised by hearing voices or paranoid beliefs) and bipolar disorder (BD) (characterised by mood swings) are common forms of serious mental health problems. Clinical services typically define recovery in terms of absence of symptoms. In contrast, service users conceptualise recovery as a unique process rather an end point, with key themes including hope, rebuilding self and rebuilding life. Our research aimed to understand and promote recovery in psychosis and BD, in a manner that is acceptable to and empowering of service users. Six linked projects were conducted using a variety of methods to develop new ways of measuring recovery; to understand what recovery means to service users and what factors promote recovery; to understand how recovery, symptoms and psychological well-being are related; to examine what sort of factors predict recovery; and to test three new interventions. All projects were conducted in collaboration with service users and the research team included two service user researchers. Our research has made significant additions to our understanding and promotion of recovery, including the development of two new measures which were shown to be valid and acceptable to service users. We have shown that we can measure recovery, that factors such as reduced negative emotions, increased self-esteem and hope are predictive of recovery judgements and that the new interventions tested showed promising benefits to people with psychosis and suicidal thinking and people with BD. These findings have important implications for future research and for clinical practice.
Programme Grants for Applied Research

ISSN 2050-4322 (Print)
ISSN 2050-4330 (Online)

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Editorial contact: nihredit@southampton.ac.uk

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This report
The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by PGfAR as project number RP-PG-0606-1086. The contractual start date was in August 2007. The final report began editorial review in October 2013 and was accepted for publication in April 2015. As the funder, the PGfAR programme agreed the research questions and study designs in advance with the investigators. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The PGfAR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, CCF, NETSCC, PGfAR or the Department of Health. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the PGfAR programme or the Department of Health.

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