

The catatonia syndrome: forgotten but not gone – a case report

Blerta Cenko^{1*} and Spiro Milic²

¹Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust and ²Barnet Enfield and Haringey MH NHS Trust

*Corresponding author.

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Aims. To highlight the presentation and treatment of catatonia in a patient with Schizophrenia.

Background. Catatonia is a syndrome of altered motor behaviour accompanying many general and neurological disorders. It frequently goes unrecognized, leading to the erroneous conclusion that it is rare. Signs and symptoms of catatonia are commonly relieved by the intravenous (IV) administration of a barbiturate or benzodiazepine. If the patient does not fully respond to the sedative drug, ECT becomes the default.

Result. A 61-year Caucasian male with a diagnosis of Paranoid Schizophrenia had been stable for 17 years on Clozapine. He was monitored by his GP. He resided in supported accommodation for 19 years and he was rehoused in a new borough. He was unable to obtain new prescription for Clozapine from his new GP and suffered a psychotic relapse following a period with no Clozapine and admitted under section 2 of the MHA. Clozapine was not restarted due to concerns of prolonged QTc and ectopics. Aripiprazole 15 mg and promethazine were prescribed. He was transferred to a medical ward three weeks later presenting as rigid with abnormal posturing on his bed, febrile, tachycardic and mute. He was confused, withdrawn and not responding to questions. In the medical ward he was bedbound, had high spiking temperatures, raised CK, ongoing fever. He was agitated, restless and confused with dystonic movements of arms and legs and echolalia. He developed an oral thrush, fecal impaction and was catheterised, had mittens put on due to pulling his iv cannulas. Clonazepam 2 mg QDS was prescribed, anti-psychotic stopped and rehydrated. After two weeks in hospital clozapine was reintroduced and titrated accordingly. After 8 weeks Lorazepam was introduced as 1 mg QDS and he discharged to psychiatry unit on Lorazepam 1.5 mg QDS after 82 days in medical ward. He continued to be rigid and psychotic. Treatment continued with lorazepam increased up to 16 mg daily and 8 sessions of ECT were prescribed. Following ECT his mental state improved significantly and there was no rigidity or abnormal movements.

Conclusion. Catatonia is better regarded as a movement and behavioral syndrome with particular attributes and diverse antecedents. First line of treatment is high dose of Lorazepam and second line ECT. Catatonia is a diagnosable and treatable entity. More education is needed to reinforce this message for physicians, especially in emergency departments and psychiatric facilities.

A literature review for the introduction of psychiatric simulation to University of Liverpool Medical School

Alexander Challinor^{1*} and Declan Hyland²

¹School of Medicine at the University of Liverpool, Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and ²School of Medicine at the University of Liverpool, Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust

*Corresponding author.

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Aims. The aim of this review is to systematically investigate simulation in psychiatry to enable the evidence based introduction of

psychiatry simulation into the undergraduate curriculum at the University of Liverpool.

Background. Transformations in the structure of psychiatric delivery and reductions in funding to mental health care have limited the availability of direct patient clinical experiences for medical students. Experiential learning through simulation can be utilised as a powerful pedagogical tool and provide exposure to a broad range of psychopathology.

Although psychiatric skills and knowledge are gained from the current University of Liverpool undergraduate curriculum, there is no specific well-designed psychiatry simulation.

Method. The author searched MEDLINE, EMBASE and PsycINFO databases for studies that met the inclusion criteria. Search terms included 'simulation (psychiatry or 'mental health')'. Studies were also searched using snowballing via citation tracking within the databases.

Inclusion criteria comprised studies of an educational intervention that involved simulation. The intervention had to be utilised within the field of psychiatric teaching.

Result. The literature review illustrated the dearth of studies analysing role-playing (RP) and/or simulated patients (SP) in psychiatry with it typically encountered as part of the more general communication skills curriculum. Studies analysing SP and RPs demonstrate how they build on the social context of learning alongside drawing on a range of educational theories, including experiential learning. However, studies show that well-designed simulation training should encompass more facets of learning to be transformative, specifically reflecting upon one's experiences alongside understanding and interpreting this new knowledge, allowing it to guide future actions and change practice.

Studies analysing virtual-reality in psychiatry are limited but demonstrate significant improvements in students' acquisition of key psychiatric skills and exposure to psychopathology. More studies are needed to evaluate the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of virtual-reality over more traditional methods.

Despite the increase in simulation teaching within psychiatry, and the expansion of innovative simulation approaches in other specialties, there was limited use of novel approaches found within the studies analysing psychiatric simulation. There were studies evaluating novel approaches to psychiatry simulation outside of the undergraduate curriculum.

Conclusion. Whilst there are barriers to overcome in simulation training, these are primarily logistical and are clearly outweighed by the educational gain demonstrated throughout this review. Simulation training in psychiatry has often remained limited to traditional communication-oriented scenarios using RP or SP. A greater emphasis on furthering the advancement and integration of more innovative approaches into psychiatric undergraduate teaching is needed.

The long and short of it!

Sidra Chaudhry^{1*} and Adwaita Ghosh²

¹Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust and

²Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust

*Corresponding author.

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Aims. The aim of this study was to conduct a literature search on long and short QTc and its implications on prescribing medications.

We also intended to assess the knowledge of psychiatry core trainees in the South Yorkshire region regarding QTc and its implications on prescribing for patients.

Background. The majority of emphasis lies in ensuring the QTc interval is within range for our patients before initiation of psychotropic medication and as part of monitoring during the maintenance phase. The main dread for most psychiatrists is a prolonged QTc interval, however, a short QTc is equally important to identify and manage.

Method. A literature search was performed using the key words “QTc, psychotropics, and ECG”. Results revealed extensive data on long QTc, but very few articles on prescribing psychotropics and short QTc. Most psychotropics are known to prolong QTc interval, which is what clinicians are worried about most when deciding to prescribe medications in mental health services. However, short QTc is also an equally important ECG finding which should not be ignored. We conducted a survey amongst core trainees in the South Yorkshire training scheme to gauge trainees’ knowledge of QTc and its implications when prescribing psychotropic medications. The survey was designed with SurveyMonkey and had seven questions to keep it user friendly.

Result. The survey was distributed to 47 core trainees working in the South Yorkshire region with a response rate of 42.5%. CT1s comprised 30%, CT2s comprised 40% and CT3s comprised 30% of the total number of responders. 60% trainees reported performing and reviewing ECGs as an integral part of their jobs. 50% trainees believed both a short and long QTc interval were life threatening with 50% considering only long QTc as being fatal. 95% of the responders reported not knowing any medications causing QTc shortening; however 100% reported knowing medications causing QTc prolongation.

Conclusion. The results clearly show that we need to increase awareness regarding short QTc interval and its implications on patient health. Review of literature also highlights the challenges in treating patients with QTc abnormalities. In such situations, it’s advised to seek advice from Cardiology colleagues to ensure safe and effective patient care. It would also be beneficial to arrange refresher workshops to help psychiatrists brush on their ECG skills.

The blues, and an almost shocking surprise – Unexpected PE in a catatonic patient, that almost had ECT

Michael Cheah*, Ashma Mohamed and Anand Mathilakath
Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

*Corresponding author.

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Aims. To present a case of a near-miss, where an unexpected Pulmonary Embolism (PE) was identified in a patient with psychotic depression and catatonia, who almost had Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT). Our aim is to highlight the importance of Venous-Thrombo Embolism (VTE) risk assessment in all psychiatric inpatients, particularly those with catatonia, and those about to undergo ECT.

Method. A 53-year-old female admitted with her first presentation of psychotic depression, catatonia, poor oral intake, and significant weight loss in the community for months prior to admission. She was recommended for emergency ECT as the severity of her self-neglect was becoming life threatening. Her first ECT session was cancelled due to low potassium levels prior to ECT, which proved to be a fortunate event. She developed sudden onset chest pain the next day, and following further medical investigations; was diagnosed to have a bilateral PE, and subsequently treated with Apixaban. Due to the potential risk of ECT dislodging the clots, treatment was done by optimising medication alone; Venlafaxine 300 mg, Mirtazapine 45 mg, Haloperidol 6 mg. She made a slow

but successful recovery, and was discharged home, with ongoing support from Early Intervention in Psychosis services.

Result. We conducted a literature search, and it is well known that there is an increased risk of VTE in catatonic patients, as well as other psychiatric inpatients; due to anti-psychotic medication. Furthermore, cases have been reported where ECT was associated with increased risk of death in patients with known VTE/PE.

On retrospective review of the patient’s risks of developing VTE in the community, it was clear, that she was at very high risk of developing VTE. It was also noted that she should have had a VTE risk assessment on admission, in accordance with NICE guidelines; where all acute psychiatric inpatients should have this assessed as soon as possible.

Conclusion. Through a process of assessment and treatment, VTE is often preventable. Identification of high-risk patients on admission to hospital is therefore crucial. It is thus, imperative that a comprehensive VTE risk assessment is completed on admission and regularly reviewed.

This case highlights the risk of missing VTE assessments in WAA Inpatients, particularly those with catatonia, about to undergo ECT, which could have been fatal. As such, VTE/PE risk assessment in such patients, about to undergo ECT, is particularly crucial.

Clinicians need to have a high index of suspicion of VTE/PE, particularly in patients with catatonia.

An enquiry into my use of supervised clinical assessments in the supervision of junior trainees

Yuan Choo*

Dorset Healthcare University NHS Foundation Trust

*Corresponding author.

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Aims. As a particular example of action research, to enquire into my use of Assessments of Clinical Expertise in my supervision of junior trainees, with the intention of further developing my own practice as an educator.

Background. Work-Place Based Assessments (WPBAs) play an established role currently in the assessment of trainee doctors (tenCate, 2017). In psychiatry, supervised clinical assessments (ACE/mini-ACE) assess a trainee’s proficiency in various areas. As part of my PGCert in Medical Education, I was inspired to examine how I conduct and utilise this form of assessment, and indeed the underpinning values and beliefs, about learning, and developing professional wisdom.

Method. This enquiry was situated within the interpretivist tradition. I interrogated my views about the epistemology of knowledge, and how they had changed from pre-university. I made clear my influences from Coles (Fish & Coles, 1998) on professional practice. I investigated my values in performing an assessment, comparing them to those of the wider community. I examined the literature on the validity of this as a tool. I then performed an assessment of a junior, with a consultant observing, before interviewing them separately.

Result. There has been a paradigm shift in how I view assessments, from pre-university in Singapore, to medical training in the UK. The history of WPBAs and the values espoused is intriguing. Consultants and experts may view assessments differently from trainees, but a core value of developing professional judgement is common.

In my interview with the consultant, there were themes around having a clear focus for an assessment, and provision of feedback; the rating scales and how they used them to stimulate feedback; and our shared values in performing an assessment. With the junior, the themes were around the delivery of feedback (including non-verbal), an