How We Understand Hallucinations (HUSH)

K. Caldwell1, R. Upthegrove1, J. Ives2, M. Broome3, S. Wood4, F. Oyebode5

1School of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom; 2College of Medical and Dental Sciences, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom; 3Psychiatry, University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom; 4School of Psychology, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom; 5Psychiatry, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom

Introduction

Evidence suggests that the subjective experience of AVHs cannot be explained by any of the existing cognitive models,[1] highlighting the obvious need to properly investigate the actual, lived experience of AVHs, and derive models/theories that fit the complexity of this.

Objectives

Via phenomenological interviews and ethnographic diary methods, we aim to gain a deeper insight into the experience of AVHs.

Aims

To explore the phenomenological quality of AVHs, as they happen/reveal themselves to consciousness,[2][3] without relying on existing suppositions.

Methods

Participants with First Episode Psychosis were recruited from the Birmingham Early Intervention Service (EIS), BSMHFT. In-depth ‘walking interviews’ were carried out with each participant, together with standardised assessment measures of voices. Prior to interviews, participants were asked to complete a dairy and take photographs, further capturing aspects of their AVH experiences.

Results

20 participants have completed interviews to date. Emerging themes cover the form and quality of voices (i.e. as being separate to self, imposing, compelling etc.), and participants’ understanding and management of these experiences.

Conclusions

Authentic descriptions gleaned from participants have the potential to increase our understanding of the relationship between the phenomenology and neurobiology of AVHs and, in turn, the experience as a whole.

