

Madigan Army Medical Center

Referral Guidelines

Schizophrenia

Diagnosis/Definition

- Schizophrenia and other similar mental disorders are disturbances of thought which cause perceptual distortions, impaired or illogical inferential thinking processes, communication difficulties and behavior disturbances for a period longer than one month.
- The condition is difficult to treat and frequently results in a residual state of social impairment and loss of initiative.

Initial Diagnosis and Management

- The most important consideration for the physician is recognizing treatable medical conditions which may cause similar symptoms: street drug use, delirium due to toxic substances or poisoning, brain impairments due to traumatic or organic causes, endocrine disorders (thyroid) or immune disorders that affect the CNS.
- The disease typically has a gradual onset of social and behavioral difficulties but may present for treatment in an acute stage when history is difficult to obtain.
- Management is primarily with the use of neuroleptics (olanzapine or haloperidol) and hospitalization or sheltered environments in the acute stages if safety is impaired.

Ongoing Management Objectives

- Reduction of psychotic thought processes and improvement in social interaction skills are the primary objectives.
- Indications for Specialty Care Referral
- All first onset schizophrenias should be referred to a psychiatrist for initial management and development of a comprehensive treatment plan.

Criteria for Return to Primary Care

- After a period of stabilization, redevelopment of some social and occupational skills and titration of medication to a consistent dose, selected stable patients may be followed by primary care on a monthly to quarterly basis for medication refills and attention to the onset of new medical conditions (which the patient may or may not present as a complaint).
- Recommend at least yearly re-referral to a psychiatrist for consultation and review of the treatment plan.

Last Review for this Guideline: **April 2010**
Referral Guidelines require review every three years.

Maintained by the Madigan Army Medical Center - Quality Services Division
Clinical Practice and Referral Guidelines Administrator