

CEDAR clinic to treat earliest psychosis signs

By Phyllis Hanlon

While the study of psychosis has been ongoing for the last 100 years, little attention has been devoted to developing preventative measures. This past March, a Boston-based program opened its doors and hopes to address this issue. A team of professionals at The Center for Early Detection, Assessment and Response to Risk (CEDAR) will assess teenagers and young adults at risk for developing psychosis and provide appropriate services.

CEDAR represents a collaborative effort between Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center Department of Psychiatry, in affiliation with Harvard Medical School and the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health (DMH); the Sidney R. Baer, Jr. Foundation is providing grant assistance for the clinic. CEDAR currently shares storefront space in Roxbury with a DMH-operated community support program for young people.

The driving force behind this initiative, Larry J. Seidman, Ph.D., director of the DMH supported Center of Excellence in Clinical Neuroscience and Psychopharmacological Research and professor of psychology at Harvard Medical School, has spent nearly four decades studying psychosis in adolescents and young adults and has served as principal investigator in several National Institute of Mental Health-sponsored clinical studies. Thanks to these trials, the medical field has begun to shine a spotlight on those who manifest early warning signs of psychosis and develop ways to address the issue. Seidman, together with Anthony Giuliano, Ph.D., director of high risk studies in Seidman's research group, wrote the grant to fund the clinic.

The CEDAR clinic will work with those who display clinical signs of risk, including "attenuated positive symptoms," according to Seidman. "We want to develop programs to treat people before they become psychotic," he says. "It's harder to reverse a problem if you let it go too long. We are looking at social factors, biology and psychology and trying to figure out how to define the high risk disorder."

Michelle Friedman-Yakoobian, Ph.D., clinical team leader of the CEDAR clinic, explains that services will include cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), multi-family group counseling, psycho-pharmacology, wraparound services and other supports. Friedman-Yakoobian runs the program with Medical Director Suzannah Zimmet, M.D.

Although psychologists receive training in psychosis, early identification can be challenging, according to Friedman-Yakoobian. Therefore, CEDAR has made community outreach and education one of its key strategies. "We do lots of free training," she says. "The more we can educate people in the community, the more they will know how to contact us. We can connect them to the appropriate services."

Friedman-Yakoobian has already addressed professionals about the advances in the field of psychosis, including ways to identify and treat symptoms through workshops and

programs that offer Continuing Education Credits (CEs) and Continuing Medical Education (CMEs). On an ongoing basis, she will visit college counseling centers, high schools and primary care physicians who specialize in adolescent medicine.

While identification is critical, Friedman-Yakoobian emphasizes the importance of not applying labels. "We are identifying people more at risk. But even if they are identified, it might not be psychosis that is causing distress or dysfunction," she says. "We are treating, not labeling. With our help, we hope to increase resilience, decrease stress and encourage family support."

"As we grow, we'll do more," says Friedman-Yakoobian. "We would like to provide access across the Commonwealth."

For more information about CEDAR, call 617-516-5120 or email mfriedm3@bidmc.harvard.edu.

http://www.nepsy.com/leading/10.09_cedar.html