Schizophrenia: “It’s Not a Split Personality!”

Schizophrenia is a serious disorder which affects how a person thinks, feels and acts. Someone with schizophrenia may have difficulty distinguishing between what is real and what is imaginary, may be unresponsive or withdrawn, and may have difficulty expressing normal emotions in social situations.

Contrary to public perception, schizophrenia is not split personality or multiple personality. The vast majority of people with schizophrenia are not violent and do not pose a danger to others. Schizophrenia is not caused by childhood experiences, poor parenting, or lack of willpower.

Behaviors that are early warning signs of schizophrenia include:

- Hearing or seeing something that isn’t there
- A constant feeling of being watched, marked paranoia
- Peculiar or nonsensical way of speaking or writing
- Strange body positioning
- Feeling indifferent to very important situations
- Deterioration of academic or work performance
- A change in personal hygiene and appearance
- A change in personality
- Increasing withdrawal from social situations
- Irrational, angry or fearful response to loved ones
- Inability to sleep or concentrate
- Inappropriate or bizarre behavior
- Extreme preoccupation with religion or the occult

Schizophrenia affects about 1% of the world population. In the United States one in a hundred people, about 2.5 million, have this disease. Symptoms usually appear between the ages of 13 and 25, but often appear earlier in males than females.

What are the symptoms of schizophrenia?

Positive symptoms are disturbances that are “added” to the person’s personality.

- **Delusions** -- false ideas--individuals may believe that someone is spying on him or her, or that they are someone famous or have special connections with a celebrity.
- **Hallucinations** --seeing, feeling, tasting, hearing or smelling something that doesn’t really exist. The most common experience is hearing imaginary voices that give commands or comments to the individual.
• **Disordered thinking and speech** -- moving from one topic to another, in a nonsensical fashion. Individuals may make up their own words or sounds.

**Negative symptoms** are capabilities that are “lost” from the person’s personality, such as social withdrawal, extreme apathy, and a lack of drive or initiative.

**What treatments are available for schizophrenia?**

**Recovery and Rehabilitation**

Recovery is possible through a variety of services, including medication and rehabilitation programs. Rehabilitation can help a person recover the confidence and skills needed to live a productive and independent life in the community. Types of services that help a person with schizophrenia include:

- **Case management** helps people access services, financial assistance, treatment and other resources. This service provides an advocate in the community for someone with a mental illness and can be an excellent support.
- **Psychosocial Rehabilitation Programs** are programs that help people regain skills such as: employment, cooking, cleaning, budgeting, shopping, socializing, problem solving, and stress management.
- **Self-help groups** provide on-going support and information to persons with serious mental illness by individuals who experience mental illness themselves.
- **Drop-in centers** are places where individuals with mental illness can socialize and/or receive informal support and services on an as-needed basis.
- **Housing programs** offer a range of support and supervision from 24 hour supervised living to drop-in support as needed.
- **Employment programs** assist individuals in finding employment and/or gaining the skills necessary to re-enter the workforce.
- **Therapy/Counseling** includes different forms of “talk” therapy, both individual and group, that can help both the patient and family members to better understand the illness and share their concerns.
- **Crisis Services** include 24 hour hotlines, after hours counseling, residential placement and in-patient hospitalization.

Can we help you find a treatment provider? Please contact the Mental Health Association of East Tennessee at **(865)-584-9125** for a referral.

Take an anonymous FREE mental health screening at **www.mhaet.com**

*This fact sheet is not a diagnostic tool and should not be used as such. A licensed mental health provider has to conduct a thorough assessment to determine if the illness meets the criteria.*