

## EARLY RECOGNITION AND TREATMENT OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS AT-RISK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SEVERE MENTAL DISORDERS

A. Pfennig, M. Bauer, K. Leopold

Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Carl Gustav Carus University Hospital, TU Dresden, Dresden, Germany

**Introduction:** Despite improvements in treatment for patients with severe mental disorders, such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, there is still a long delay from first symptoms to correct diagnosis and treatment. Since these illnesses usually manifest themselves within adolescence and young adulthood, this time lag impacts chances for an adequate individual development.

**Objectives:** With rather unspecific symptomatology in early stages of the development of the disorders and the still existing stigmatisation, a broad and low-threshold strategy is needed. In November 2008 an early recognition and prevention centre for mental disorders was opened at the University Hospital in Dresden.

**Aims:** The aim of this service is to shorten the delay to correct diagnosis and treatment in severe mental disorders. In parallel, early detection instruments are developed and early intervention strategies studied in research projects.

**Methods:** In this specialized centre diagnostics, counselling and treatment are provided for subjects aged 12 to 40 by a multidisciplinary team in a low-threshold setting.

**Results:** 250 youth and young adults were offered diagnostics and, if appropriate, treatment. In about 2/3 of clients, mental disorders had already manifested themselves, in some cases an additional risk for even more severe developments was ascertained. Counselling and transfer to appropriate treatment is offered to all clients, all are followed up on a regular basis to validate the process and assess the prognostic value of our service.

**Conclusions:** A broad, low-threshold and multidisciplinary approach for early recognition and treatment of severe mental disorders holds the chance of earlier appropriate care.