



Schizophrenia



The upcoming fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) makes several key changes to the category of schizophrenia and highlights for future study an area that could be critical for early detection of this often debilitating condition.

Changes to the Diagnosis

Schizophrenia is characterized by delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech and behavior, and other symptoms that cause social or occupational dysfunction. For a diagnosis, symptoms must have been present for six months and include at least one month of active symptoms.

DSM-5 raises the symptom threshold, requiring that an individual exhibit at least two of the specified symptoms. (In the manual's previous editions, that threshold was one.) Additionally, the diagnostic criteria no longer identify subtypes. Subtypes had been defined by the predominant symptom at the time of evaluation. But these were not helpful to clinicians because patients' symptoms often changed from one subtype to another and presented overlapping subtype symptoms, which blurred distinctions among the five subtypes and decreased their validity. Some of the subtypes are now specifiers to help provide further detail in diagnosis. For example, catatonia (marked by motor immobility and stupor) will be used as a specifier for schizophrenia and other psychotic conditions such as schizoaffective disorder. This specifier can also be used in other disorder areas such as bipolar disorders and major depressive disorder.

Area for Further Study

Attenuated psychosis syndrome is included in Section III of the new manual; conditions listed there require further research before their consideration as formal disorders. This potential category would identify a person who does not have a full-blown psychotic disorder but exhibits minor versions of relevant symptoms. Identifying individuals with an increased risk for developing a psychotic disorder is significant for effective early intervention, but more study is needed to ensure that attenuated psychosis syndrome can be reliably diagnosed.

Additional research will result in new information and data that can guide future editions of DSM to improve diagnosis and care.

DSM is the manual used by clinicians and researchers to diagnose and classify mental disorders. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) will publish DSM-5 in 2013, culminating a 14-year revision process. For more information, go to www.DSM5.org.

APA is a national medical specialty society whose more than 36,000 physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psychiatry.org and www.healthyminds.org.