
STATEMENT OF EUFAMI'S POSITION ON **EARLY INTERVENTION IN PSYCHOSIS.**

This statement reflects the views of families and friends of people living with mental ill health in the fundamental importance of early intervention in psychosis.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence and early adulthood are a high-risk period for developing mental ill health. Generally, young people between the age of 14 up to 30 years, who experience psychological disturbances, difficult functioning and distorted relations with family and friends, may display social withdrawal, lack of motivation and risk of loss of life opportunities.

The early phase of psychosis, from the earliest signs to two years after a first psychotic episode, is a critical period influencing and affecting long-term biological, psychological, and functional outcomes. A failure to intervene efficaciously in this fundamental period, has significant negative consequences in terms of reduced capacity to reach the emotional, social, and vocational potential of the young person, stress and suffering for the family, as well as wider social and economic costs. Inadequate treatment after a first episode could result in a chronic condition.

In accordance to recent research, EUFAMI believes that early intervention in psychosis, can significantly reduce the risk of further psychotic episodes and of suicide attempts during this critical period. This preventive approach, intervening assertively in the early stages of psychosis, alters the progress of the mental health condition, shortens the duration of untreated psychosis, and lowers the level of distress of the patient and his or her family.

People in the early stage of psychosis, are best treated by assertive Multi-Disciplinary Early Intervention Teams delivering psychological, psychosocial, and pharmacological support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- National governments should include the development and delivery of early intervention services in their public health priorities.
- International organisations and policy-makers should continue to articulate the universal principles of early intervention in psychosis and seek for a consensus document on the subject, adopting the principles of prevention of mental ill health and mental health promotion in their campaigns.
- Families should be supported and trained during the early phase to promote health-seeking behaviors and reduce the delay in diagnosis and treatment initiation. Well-trained and knowledgeable families are in a unique position to be able to recognize emergent symptoms of psychosis and encourage early contact with medical services.
- Community Care services should cooperate with General Practitioners, services for Early prevention in Psychosis and families to be more effective. GPs require more training in recognizing and treating early psychosis and in supporting families.
- Evidence-based 'Best Practices' in EIP, which have proved to be cost-effective as well should be acknowledged as such.
- Governments should raise the public awareness about the dangers of illegal drugs, alcohol, substance abuse and self-medication in their role as triggers.
- Health services should focus on the situation of parents and siblings of person living with mental ill health. Family members experience significant stress, which can increase the incidence of symptoms of mental ill health in themselves.
- Persons who are responsible for the education of young people, such as teachers, school headmasters and sport coaches, should be informed about the risk factors of psychosis and its early signs. Information campaigns on psychosocial disabilities, such as symptoms of psychosis, should be held in schools.
- Educational programs should be developed to promote and deliver increased levels of public awareness to the general public, in order to reduce stigma surrounding psychosocial disabilities, which often prevents young people from seeking help, and to prevent bullying at school and on social media.
- The use of Open Dialogue Treatment should be increased. Incorporating family and relatives into the treatment at the onset of a psychotic crisis by creating a safe environment for

dialogue, has shown to be a highly effective treatment, reducing the need of antipsychotic medication.