

## **Family Experiences Shorten Duration of Untreated Psychosis**

Psychosis is the early stage of manifestation of psychiatric illnesses. Patients with psychosis are in a mental state with a distorted perception of the reality. In a psychotic episode, patients may experience hallucinations, delusions, paranoia, disorganized thinking, social withdrawal and decline in functioning.

Similar to fever, psychosis is a warning sign from the body. A person with psychosis may mean that he or she may possibly have psychiatric disorder(s), particularly schizophrenia. The estimated incidence of psychosis is 0.22 out of 1000 new cases per year and the estimated prevalence is around 1%. Risk factors include genetic inheritance and drug abuse.

Researchers at the Faculty of Medicine, the University of Hong Kong (HKU), reported in May 2005 that family's experience of psychosis shortened the duration of untreated psychosis (DUP). Patients who seek treatment earlier may increase the chance for better rehabilitation outcomes.

The longer the DUP (duration from first symptoms to first related drug intake), the poorer is the expected rehabilitation outcomes. With a longer DUP, the chance for developing severe secondary complications increases. Patients may begin to have problems in various domains in life like occupation, social life, family and develop psychiatric complications. Patients may also have irreversible psychological damages after a prolonged psychotic state.