A Qualitative Study of Medication Adherence amongst People with Schizophrenia

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Thesis submitted for the degree of

Combined Master of Psychology (Clinical) / Doctor of Philosophy

School of Psychology
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December, 2012
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ABSTRACT

The introduction of antipsychotic medication revolutionised the treatment of schizophrenia and significantly improved outcomes for consumers. Nonetheless, non-adherence to antipsychotic medication regimens is common amongst consumers. Whilst ample research has attempted to quantify rates of adherence and identify influences on adherence and non-adherence, few qualitative studies have been undertaken in the area and the consumers' voices have thereby been limited. The research presented in this thesis aimed to enhance understanding of medication adherence from the consumer perspective. Qualitative, semi-structured, one-to-one interviews were conducted with 25 outpatients with schizophrenia from metropolitan Adelaide. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed, guided by a grounded theory approach. Codes identified in open coding were grouped into categories, reflective of the different aspects of consumers’ medication taking experiences. It is argued that consumer-related factors, medication-related factors and service-related factors influence adherence behaviour. Whilst some of the codes that were identified as influences on adherence were consistent with previous research findings, such as insight, side effects, efficacy and therapeutic alliance, analysis elaborated different aspects of these factors and shed some light on how they influence adherence. The most commonly raised, novel codes that emerged from interview data related to reflection on experiences and peer worker intervention. Specifically, interviewees commonly reported that they learned from previous illness and medication-related experiences, including
the experience of non-adherence, which was frequently constructed as a motivator for future adherence. Furthermore, when enquired about interventions, many interviewees suggested that peer workers may work more effectively with consumers to encourage adherence. In particular, peer workers were positioned as having more credibility than other service providers due to their shared experiences with consumers. Research findings support greater involvement of consumers in research due to their valuable contributions. Furthermore, regarding the clinical implications, findings support tailored, individualised interventions, enhanced peer worker involvement and challenge service providers’ poor tolerance of non-adherence on the grounds that adherence may represent a learning process.
DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution to Lucinda Clifford and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide.

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Lucinda Clifford

Date
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I’d like to take the opportunity to thank those who have been instrumental in assisting me throughout the course of my research journey.

Firstly, to my supervisory panel, Professor Deborah Turnbull, Dr Shona Crabb and Professor Cherrie Galletly – thank you all for your perseverance, guidance and support. Deb, you have consistently provided me with constructive feedback, motivation and gave me a push when I needed it! Shona, your encouragement and positive regard have been much appreciated and your analytical knowledge has been invaluable. Cherrie, your extensive clinical experience combined with your enthusiasm for the subject matter was a true inspiration. I’d also like to mention Bev Hisee, Research Nurse, who assisted me greatly in my interactions with consumers and whose knowledge and genuineness impressed.

To the incredible group of interviewees involved in this research and to those consumers who I met along the way – this thesis would not have been possible without your insightful contributions. Thank you for your openness, cooperation and for your fascinating stories that have brought this thesis to life.

To my family, in particular, my parents, Joe and Carol, thanks for putting up with me and for putting a roof over my head for all these years. I promise to clear the mound of articles that have accumulated in the study! You have always been there for me to rely on and I cannot thank you enough for your ongoing belief in me. To my beautiful sister, Rebecca, my brother-in-law, Josh, and the adorable Moll - thank you for opening up your home to me and for giving me perspective during the tough times. Josh, not sure what I would have done without your last-minute technical support!
Finally, I’d like to acknowledge my fabulous friends for all the laughs and good times over the years that have kept me going.