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Introduction: Internalized or self-stigma is known to affect engagement with treatment and long term outcomes in people with chronic mental illness. Little data exists regarding the incidence of internalized stigma in young people experiencing first-episode psychosis and there are no clearly proven interventions with which to address it in this age group.

Objectives: To identify the extent of internalized stigma in young people with first-episode psychosis.

Methods: 52 young people (mean age 21 years) attending an early intervention service in Wellington, New Zealand completed Internalized Stigma of Mental Illness (ISMI) scales at the start of a randomized controlled trial of a new narrative-based psychotherapeutic intervention. Mean total and subscale ISMI scores were compared with a previously studied older cohort of people with chronic mental illness.

Results: Statistically significant differences in total and most subscale ISMI scores were identified between young people with first-episode psychosis and the older cohort of people with chronic mental illness.

Conclusions: Internalized stigma exists, but is less severe in young people with first-episode psychosis than older people with chronic mental illness. Potential reasons and implications will be discussed.