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EVALUATION OF 2 YEARS' RESIDENTIAL CARE TREATMENT FOR ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA

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Aims: In 2002 the Professor Eggers Foundation started a 2-year-programme for patients suffering from early-onset schizophrenia (EOS) following discharge from a clinic (outpatient care). The aim is with intense residential care and treatment to support recovery and independence. Interactive and psychoeducational family care, coping with persistent symptoms, development of social and emotional competence, independent house keeping, and support of school and vocational training are the main features.

Methods: Psychopathology, social and neuropsychological function were assessed with a set of questionnaires and tests at the start, after 1 year and after 2 years on completion of the programme for 12 participants. Living and working situation were monitored. The results were compared with the progress of 12 EOS patients treated as usual (comparison group).

Results: Positive and negative symptoms showed a significantly greater decrease with respect to the comparison group. Social function improved considerably stronger in the participants. Working memory, attention and some executive functions also improved in the participants, while there was a deterioration of speed and selective attention (trend) in the comparison group. Neither group showed changes in measures of intelligence or the subjective quality of life with the exception of increased contentedness with family relations in the participants.

Conclusions: We show the benefits of an early intensive residential training programme for EOS patients. Further research may be able to show if these improvements can be maintained and whether the costs of the programme are economical avoiding continued residential care.