

Option 2: Schizophrenia

Extended Question Answers

2 2

Briefly discuss **two** limitations of the family dysfunction explanation for schizophrenia.

[6 marks]

A limitation of the family dysfunction theory is that it places blame on the parents of the schizophrenic individual, which is unethical. This is because, the parents of the schizophrenic individual may in turn suffer psychological harm from the guilt that they feel at playing a part in causing their child to have this psychotic disorder. In fact, this may cause them to distance themselves from their child in an attempt to prevent exacerbation of their child's condition, which may have a negative impact on the prognosis of their child.

AO3

Another limitation of the family dysfunction theory is that not all individuals have the same susceptibility to the effects of a high Expressed Emotion environment. Altorfer et al (1998) found that a quarter of their patients showed no response to the 'stressful' comments made by their relatives. It was suggested earlier by Lebell et al (1993) that this difference is due to how individuals perceive the comments made by their relatives- some may not see them as being stressful and thus not a causal factor in their development of schizophrenia. **AO3**

Mark: 6

2 3

Outline and evaluate the use of antipsychotic drugs to treat schizophrenia.

[8 marks]

Typical antipsychotics are an older form of antipsychotic drugs and work by blocking the action of dopamine (D2) receptors in the mesolimbic pathway, blocking the action of dopamine, which in excess has been implicated in causing the positive effects of schizophrenia. As the drugs bind to the receptors without stimulating them, dopaminergic activity is reduced, causing delusions and hallucinations to be reduced within a few days of taking the medication. **AO1**

However, due to about 60-70% of D2 receptors needing to be blocked for these drugs to be effective at treating schizophrenia, extrapyramidal side effects are common with the use of typical antipsychotics. Such side effects involve 'Parkinsonian' symptoms named due to their resemblance to the symptoms experienced by Parkinson's sufferers. In fact, prolonged use of typical antipsychotics can cause 'tardive dyskinesia'- involuntary movements of the tongue, face and jaw. Ways of managing these side effects involve the administration of other drugs, or stopping the use of typical antipsychotics, which makes their use effectively redundant in the latter situation, reducing their overall effectiveness. **AO3**

Atypical antipsychotics work similarly to typical antipsychotics, but rather temporarily bind to D2 receptors before dissociating. These, as a result, carry a lower risk of extrapyramidal side effects than typical drugs, and are believed to have an effect on negative symptoms as well as positive symptoms due to them having a higher affinity for serotonin receptors than dopamine receptors. This difference also explains the difference in side effects explained by the users of these antipsychotics. **AO1**

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In fact, Crossley (2010) completed a meta analysis which confirmed this. Although a major difference between the efficacy of the drugs was not found, Crossley identified a difference in the severity of the symptoms experienced by users of both drugs, with users of typical drugs experiencing more severe side effects. **AO3**

Marks: 8

2 1

Jack has been diagnosed with schizophrenia. He describes his family background to his therapist:

'I could never talk to mum. She fussed over me all the time. I tried to do what she said, but could never please her. One minute she seemed all affectionate and the next minute she would make nasty comments. My dad hated all the arguments and stayed out of it.'

Describe the family dysfunction explanation for schizophrenia and explain how Jack's experiences can be linked to the family dysfunction explanation.

[8 marks]

One family dysfunction explanation is the idea of expressed emotion - living in highly emotional environments. Individuals living in high EE environments are more likely to develop schizophrenia. Regarding Jack, his other is described to be continually fussing over him, which suggests over involvement, a key factor in expressed emotion. Jack as result, feels pressured to try and please his mother which leads to stress that could trigger the onset of schizophrenia. Hostility is also a trademark of a high EE environment, which is demonstrated by Jack's father both hating and staying out of the arguments between Jack and his mother. By ignoring Jack and during the arguments and perhaps not coming to his defence, Jack's father contributed to the levels of express emotion in the family environment.

Another explanation is the double bind theory in which children may be given two messages on two separate communicative levels that are at odds with each other. With Jack, his mother showed him affection but would very quickly make 'nasty comments' towards him. This discrepancy between physical affection and verbal animosity can lead to schizophrenia manifesting in the forms of withdrawal or affective flattening - a reduction in the intensity and range of emotional expression. These symptoms are a result of Jack's confusion as to how to respond to his mother's contradictory behaviour.

