

RECOMMENDATION ON THE COGNITIVE REHABILITATION OF PEOPLE WITH PSYCHOTIC DISORDERS IN THE SCHIZOPHRENIA SPECTRUM

At its meeting on 15 June 2023, the Council for Choices in Health Care in Finland (COHERE Finland) adopted a recommendation on the cognitive rehabilitation of people with psychotic disorders in the schizophrenia spectrum.

According to the recommendation, cognitive rehabilitation, which has been proven to be effective and is based on a structured method, is included in the range of healthcare services for the treatment of adults and young people with schizophrenia-spectrum psychoses. The methods are described in the recommendation.

Effective cognitive rehabilitation methods can help improve and develop patients' cognitive functioning, strengthen their means of compensation, provide positive learning experiences, improve their self-confidence and increase their activity. To provide them, service providers should have at their disposal an adequate range of cognitive rehabilitation methods making it possible to take individual rehabilitation needs into account.

In planning rehabilitation, patients' individual needs and objectives should be considered, and a tailored rehabilitation path should be created for each patient. Cognitive rehabilitation should be part of other treatment, and different interventions should be combined into a set of mutually supportive measures.

According to research results, the effectiveness of methods is higher if the therapist takes an active role, the intervention includes developing and repeatedly practising cognitive strategies, and cognitive rehabilitation is tied to other rehabilitation.

The recommendation applies to patients over 12 years of age who have a psychotic disorder in the schizophrenia spectrum (ICD-10 diagnoses F20–F29).

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The recommendation is targeted at public healthcare service organisers that organise rehabilitation for patients with schizophrenia-spectrum psychoses.

Schizophrenia-spectrum psychoses often seriously impair patients' functioning. Around 2.3 per cent of the population in Finland suffer from a schizophrenia-spectrum psychosis at some stage of their lives. The typical symptoms include psychotic episodes during which the person's sense of reality and often also their ability to regulate their behaviour are severely impaired. Often, people with schizophrenia-spectrum psychoses also exhibit other psychological symptoms, such as depression and anxiety.

People with schizophrenia-spectrum psychoses are a vulnerable patient group. The service system must ensure that these patients also have access to rehabilitation in accordance with their individual needs. When organising services, it is important to consider the long-term and fluctuating nature of the disorder.

The methods can be considered safe. Any adverse effects are mild and do not cause permanent and serious harm, provided that the patients' continued rehabilitation is ensured.

COHERE Finland estimates that the maximum annual cost to public finances caused by the recommendation would be approximately EUR 3 million, which is less than 0.2 per cent of the overall costs to society from schizophrenia-spectrum psychoses (totalling nearly EUR 2.1 billion according to cautious estimates), were cognitive rehabilitation provided as widely across Finland as it is currently in the HUS Group. The additional cost from expanding the method's use would likely be considerably lower than the costs of provision, as the costs for providing less effective rehabilitation would be avoided, and indirect costs (e.g. the need for hospital care following patients' improved condition and the amount of sickness allowance following patients' improved labour status) would probably decrease as well.

The recommendation and the separate preparatory document contain further details about the knowledge forming the basis for the recommendation, as well as a description of the disorder and a more detailed account of the methods discussed in the recommendation and their effectiveness.

This is a summary of a recommendation adopted by the Council for Choices in Health Care in Finland (COHERE Finland). The actual recommendation and the related background material are available in Finnish on the website of COHERE Finland under [Recommendations](#).

The summary of the recommendation is also available in [Swedish](#) and [Finnish](#) on the website.

The Council for Choices in Health Care in Finland (COHERE Finland) works in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and its task is to issue recommendations on services that should be included in the range of public health services. Further information about service choices in healthcare is available on the [COHERE Finland website](#).