

Unmet needs of young adults following first-episode psychosis in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa: Baseline findings from a pilot randomised controlled trial of basic income support

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BACKGROUND

People with psychosis have multiple and complex needs. The first episode of psychosis (FEP), as a distinct health challenge that occurs frequently during adolescence or early adult years, is a serious threat because of high levels of poverty among the youth in South Africa.

AIM

This study quantifies the needs among unemployed FEP adults aged 18–29 years in South Africa for potential early intervention targeting.

SETTING

The study was conducted at government psychiatric facilities in Msunduzi Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa.

METHODS

As part of a pilot randomised controlled trial of an unconditional cash transfer (UCT) intervention, also known as basic income support (BIS), 60 FEP participants were enrolled, and we assessed their needs using the Camberwell Assessment of Needs, the

Household Food Insecurity Access Scale and the Water Insecurity Experience Scale. Descriptive cross-sectional analyses were summarised for various domains of needs.

RESULTS

Most participants were black people ($n = 58$, 96.7%), male ($n = 47$, 78.3%), with a median age of 23 years (interquartile range [IQR] = 20.0–25.5), with half being diagnosed with schizophrenia ($n = 30$, 50%). The most significant severe unmet need was the inability to access government benefits to which one is entitled. Despite the limited availability of mental health services in South Africa, the majority reported that their need for managing psychotic symptoms was met or partially met.

CONCLUSION

The needs of youth must go beyond the temporary management of psychotic symptoms.