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Personality and coping in first episode psychosis linked to mental health care use

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Abstract

A body of literature focuses on associations of neuroticism, extraversion, passive coping and active coping with the course of psychotic illness. Less is known about other personality and coping variables and underlying causal mechanisms between variables remain unclear. We explored causal effects from personality, coping and symptoms on mental health care consumption over two years in 208 first episode patients. Causal inference search algorithms lead to formation of a hypothetical causal model based on presumptions on (non-)mutuality between variables and consistent with data. Structural equation modelling estimated effect sizes conditionally on the causal model. Our observed model implies that none of the coping or personality variables have any effect on the number of days of hospitalisation, whereas general psychopathology symptoms do have a direct positive effect. For ambulatory care it is proposed that openness to experience, depressive symptoms and age have direct positive effects. Reassuring thoughts as a coping strategy seems to have a direct negative effect on the use of ambulatory care and mediates indirect effects of other personality and coping variables on ambulatory care. Furthermore, while previously established relations between personality and symptoms are confirmed by our model, it challenges traditional ideas about causation between personality and symptoms.

Key-words:

Personality, coping, early psychosis, ambulatory care, hospitalisation.

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