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DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORIES OF CHILDHOOD PSYCHOSIS

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Psychosis represents an anxiety laden state of inner psychological experience that is manifested symptomatically. Psychotic symptoms may or may not be associated with a psychotic disorder while psychotic disorders are frequently accompanied by impairments in social, cognitive and psychological functioning throughout the lifespan. In spite of the increased knowledge about the underlying neurobiological factors, the genetic vulnerabilities and the contributory environmental influences on psychosis in childhood, there are unanswered questions about the nature of the developmental trajectories of psychotic disorders in children and adolescents. Studies of high risk populations have led to a more comprehensive understanding of trauma induced psychotic symptoms in youth as well as the course of severe pediatric mood disorders, such as Bipolar Disorder and Major Depressive Disorder in children. However, few investigations of the long-term longitudinal outcome of the treatment of first episode psychotic symptoms and psychotic disorders include both children and adolescents. Questions also remain about which protective factors and which psychotherapeutic interventions may facilitate the most positive outcomes in spite of the associated structural and functional brain abnormalities that may be present with the emergence of psychotic disorders in childhood. While pediatric psychotic disorders need to be understood as the outgrowth of interacting, multidimensional risk factors, their treatment requires comprehensive, multimodal interventions that incorporate supportive family treatment and individual psychotherapy as well as the judicious use of psychotropic medication. Longitudinal outcomes studies of psychotic disorders in children and adolescents likewise seldom examine associated co-occurring psychiatric disorders, cognitive weaknesses, cultural and racial differences or the impact of co-occurring trauma on the continuance of psychotic features in childhood psychiatric disorders.



Biography

James McCarthy is the Director of Field Training and Associate Professor of Psychology, Pace University, Doctor of Psychology program in School-Clinical Child Psychology in New York City and Clinical Professor of Psychology, Adelphi University, Garden City, NY. His interests include severe psychopathology in children and adults, trauma studies, cognition and training in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and he has published widely in the professional literature. He is the author and editor of a number of books. His current book "Psychosis in Childhood and Adolescence" is published by Routledge, Taylor & Francis.

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