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# Staying in School: A Systematic Review of Interventions for Individuals with Mental Illness

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Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Master of Science in Occupational Therapy degree at Thomas Jefferson University

## Objectives of Presentation:

- **Recognize** the impact of chronic mental illness on educational pursuits
- **Discuss** occupational therapy related interventions to support individuals with chronic mental illness in an academic setting
- **Describe** implications of educational attainment on social participation and work for individuals with chronic mental illness

**PICO:** What is the evidence for interventions that support the outcome of successful participation in educational settings for individuals with a mental health diagnosis?

## Methods:

- Databases searched: PubMed, PsycINFO, CINAHL, Scopus
- Search Terms
  - P: Adolescent, Student, Mental disorder, Mental diagnos\*
  - I: Occupational Therapy, Program, Treatment, Support, Service, Support\*, Servic\*
  - O: Academic Functioning, Diploma, Retention
- Critiquing Articles
  - o **Level I-IV:** Evaluation of Quality of an Intervention Study Appendix E & F <sup>15</sup>
  - o **Level V:** Level 5 Evidence Critique <sup>9</sup>
  - o **Qualitative:** Critical Review Form - Qualitative Studies (Version 2.0) <sup>16</sup>
- Number of Articles Found
  - o Initial search yielded: 1488 articles
  - o Final number of articles in systematic review: 9 quantitative and 1 qualitative

## Results:

**Themes:** Outcomes resulting from single interventions with individuals with a mental health diagnosis

1. Skill Development
  - a. Moderate evidence to support interventions which target academic skills as part of completing school <sup>3, 6, 7, 11, 14, 17</sup>
    - i. Mentoring, supported education programs, and the use of memory strategies yielded statistically significant improvements in academic skills
    - ii. A positive trend (improved academic skills) seen after use of a Cognitive Remediation computer program.
  - b. Limited evidence to support interventions addressing social skills as part of successful educational pursuits <sup>3, 7, 11, 12, 17, 21</sup>
    - i. Mentoring and supported education yielded statistically significant improvements in social skills
    - ii. Supported education also yielded clinically significant improvements in social skill development
    - iii. A mentoring approach resulted in a positive trend towards enhanced social skills
2. School Attendance
  - a. Limited evidence to support interventions designed to increase rates of enrollment in educational programs <sup>7, 11, 12, 21</sup>
    - i. Mentoring and supported education demonstrated a positive trend for increasing enrollment, average over 50% <sup>3, 7, 8, 14, 17, 21</sup>
  - b. Limited evidence to support interventions to increase retention rates of students in an academic program <sup>3, 7, 8, 14, 17, 21</sup>
    - i. Mentoring and cognitive remediation yielded statistically significant improvements in retention rates
    - ii. Use of either Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), psychoeducation, or supported education yielded a positive trend towards increased retention rates
3. Improved Symptoms
  - a. Moderate evidence to support interventions for decreased symptoms in support of academic participation <sup>3, 5, 8, 14, 17, 21</sup>
    - i. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), cognitive remediation, mentoring, and supported education each yielded statistically significant results for improving symptoms
    - ii. CBT and supported education yielded clinically significant results as a means of improving symptoms
    - iii. Use of DBT demonstrated a positive trend towards improving symptoms
4. Feelings of Competence as a Student
  - a. Insufficient evidence to support the use of interventions to enhance feelings of competence as a students <sup>11, 12, 14</sup>
    - i. Cognitive remediation, mentoring, and supported education each reported statistically significant improvements in participants' reported feelings of competence
    - ii. A mentoring approach, with additional usage of a binder of specific skill sets, resulted in a trend towards enhanced feelings of competence as a student

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