Stahl's Illustrated

Introduction

Psychosis is a collection of psychological symptoms resulting in the loss of touch with reality. It is a common feature to many psychiatric disorders, particularly schizophrenia and other conditions in the schizophrenia spectrum, as well as mood disorders (bipolar disorder and major depression with psychotic features). Psychosis may also manifest due to an underlying medical disease or substance use. Approximately 1.5 to 3.5% of people will meet diagnostic criteria for a psychotic disorder. The presence of psychosis generally indicates a serious mental illness, which often requires early intervention and long-term treatment to achieve favorable outcomes (Calabrese & Al Khalili, 2023).

So-called antipsychotics (serotonin/dopamine antagonists) are the gold-standard treatment for psychotic episodes and disorders. However, advancements in our understanding of the neurobiology of psychosis, particularly schizophrenia, may soon expand our treatment options. This expansion also challenges our conceptualization of the "antipsychotic." Antipsychotics are synonymous with dopamine D2 antagonism, but newer medications in development do not directly target this receptor. Furthermore, D2 antagonists are used to successfully treat non-psychotic symptoms like depression. Therefore, throughout this book we use the neuroscience-based nomenclature, which is based on mechanism of action and not therapeutic indication, wherever possible when referring to drugs for psychosis.

In the following pages, we describe the symptoms of psychosis, the neurocircuitry that underlies those symptoms, and the evidence-based therapeutic targets for the treatment of those symptoms. Chapters 1–2 describe the neurobiological models and neurocircuitry that underlie psychosis and how malfunctioning circuits are connected to symptoms. An emphasis is placed on schizophrenia as the prototypical psychotic disorder; however, Parkinson's disease psychosis and dementia-related psychosis are also discussed. Chapter 3 addresses additional receptor actions that lead to common side effects of serotonin/dopamine antagonists. Chapters 4–5 review pharmacological properties of dopamine receptor blocking agents and strategies for switching medications. Finally, Chapter 6 describes advancements in the development of novel pharmacological treatments for psychosis that do not directly target the dopamine D2 receptor.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009485050.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press