Association of Demographic Factors and Comorbid Diagnoses with Crime Type in an Arrest Cohort with Schizophrenia and/or Related Psychosis

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Authors

Comments
Presented at Psychiatry Research Day at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, 2009.

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BACKGROUND
The implications of the coexistence between the criminal justice system and individuals with schizophrenia persist despite decades of research on criminalization and risk of arrest. Research exploring the broader construct of criminality has predominantly focused on individuals with severe mental illness as a collective. This study diverges from others by examining diagnoses comorbid with schizophrenia and related psychoses and their relationships with risk of arrest across a spectrum of arrest categories ranging in severity.

METHODS
Demographic and comorbid diagnoses were collected from a 10-year arrest cohort of 3,538 clients of a public mental health system who had received an important diagnosis of schizophrenia or related psychosis. The likelihood of arrest across six broadly defined criminal arrest categories was examined, although not necessarily using demographics and comorbid diagnoses in separate logistic regression models.

RESULTS
Across our cohort, 63% experienced arrest for nuisance or low-level offenses, 50% were arrested for serious violent offenses, and 46% were arrested for alcohol use or alcohol use disorders, prevalent among 46% of our cohort, elevated risk of arrest across all criminal categories.

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PTSD and Serious Violent Crime
We dichotomized comorbid anxiety disorders into two variables, those with PTSD and those without. Reverting the anxiety disorder indicates that these two variables in the full cohort Serious Violent Crime model revealed that comorbid PTSD was associated with Serious Violent Crime arrest (OR = 2.35, 95% CI 1.20-4.58 p = 0.013) and non-PTSD anxiety disorder was not (OR = 1.17, 95% CI 0.84-2.52 p = 0.393). This finding was similar for males and females and consistent with observations made about violent behavior and a history of trauma in similar populations.

CONCLUSION
Diagnoses comorbid with schizophrenia carry implications for risk of arrest across a spectrum of offense categories. Risk assessment and interventions aimed at reducing offending and re-offending should identify and target comorbid psychiatric and substance abuse disorders in their efforts to reduce the likelihood of justice involvement among persons with schizophrenia.

Table 1: Characteristics of Arrest Cohort with Schizophrenia or Related Psychosis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Category</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>Schizophrenia or Related Psychoses</th>
<th>Low-Level Offenses</th>
<th>Serious Violent Offenses</th>
<th>Property Crime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serious Violent Crime</td>
<td>767 (49.9)</td>
<td>90 (7.6)</td>
<td>677 (57.1)</td>
<td>677 (57.1)</td>
<td>151 (42.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Level Offenses</td>
<td>695 (45.2)</td>
<td>136 (8.8)</td>
<td>559 (75.5)</td>
<td>559 (75.5)</td>
<td>134 (37.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Crime</td>
<td>541 (45.7)</td>
<td>90 (7.6)</td>
<td>451 (83.3)</td>
<td>451 (83.3)</td>
<td>114 (21.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offense Categories</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serious Violent Crime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low-Level Offenses</td>
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<td>Property Crime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>Odds Ratio with 95% confidence intervals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serious Violent Crime</td>
<td>1.38 (1.08-1.68)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low-Level Offenses</td>
<td>1.37 (1.08-1.73)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Property Crime</td>
<td>1.72 (1.34-2.21)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Logistic Regression Tables

Odds Ratio with 95% confidence intervals