Title: Cognitive Impairment as a Treatment Target for Individuals with Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders

Abstract:

Individuals with schizophrenia, in addition to the characteristic positive and negative symptoms of the disorder, frequently exhibit severe impairment in cognitive functioning. These cognitive deficits, which are often present before the onset of other symptoms and are found in other schizophrenia spectrum disorders, are predictive of several aspects of recovery and relapse. There is emerging evidence that psychological interventions such as cognitive remediation therapy (CRT) produce the most substantial gains in the treatment of these impairments, although response rates are far short of 100%. There are pharmacological agents that also show promise, but results from trials using these agents have produced mixed results. We are currently examining a combined approach, using both CRT and a medication targeting these cognitive symptoms, in a double-blind, randomized, placebo-controlled clinical trial. Preliminary results indicate that this combined approach is more beneficial than CRT alone, as individuals who receive the active agent plus CRT demonstrate greater improvement than those treated with CRT plus placebo. This suggests that a combined approach may be more effective at lessening the severity of these cognitive deficits, thereby promoting recovery for individuals with schizophrenia spectrum disorders.