



港大研究早期思覺失調停藥及復發  
新聞發布會

HKU Study on Medication  
Discontinuation & Relapse in Early  
Psychosis  
Press Conference

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## Study Background

- Following a good recovery from a single episode of psychosis, understandably many patients have a wish to discontinue their medications
- However, clinicians cannot offer clear advice as no solid data were available
- Many patients thus resort to covert discontinuation of medication, resulting in relapses, sometimes with disastrous consequences



## Study Background

- Relapse refers to definite (even mild) re-appearance of psychotic symptoms e.g. hallucinations, delusions, formal thought disorder
- Many patients suffer from relapse after recovery from first episode psychosis
- Once relapsed, patients usually take a longer time than before to recover



## Study Aim

- What would happen to remitted early psychosis patients (who are entirely free from psychotic symptoms) if they stop maintenance medication compared to those who continued to receive medication?



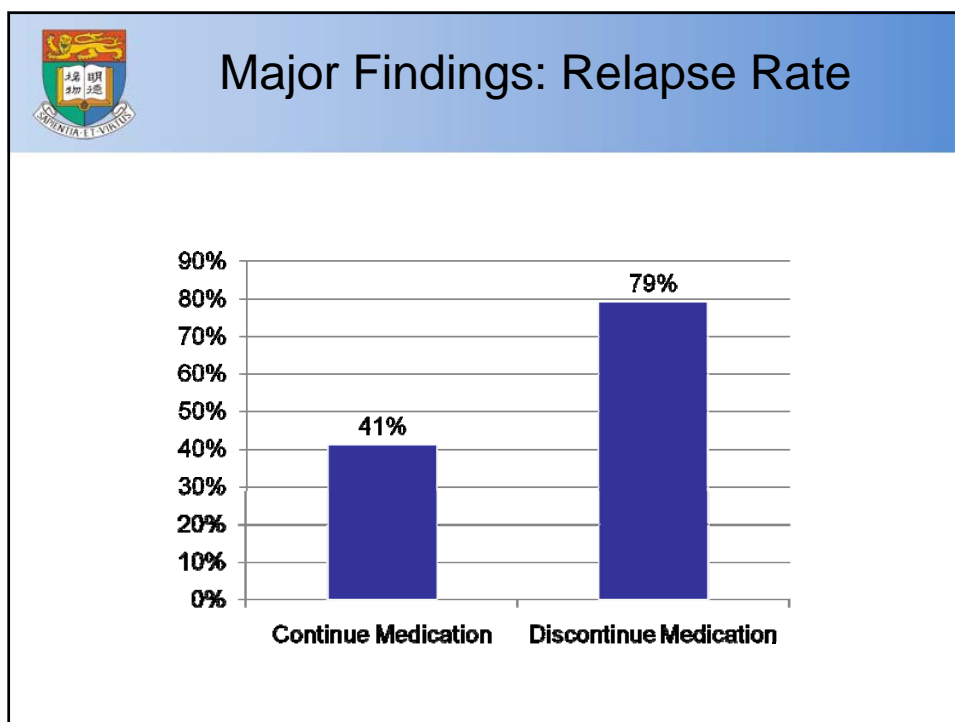
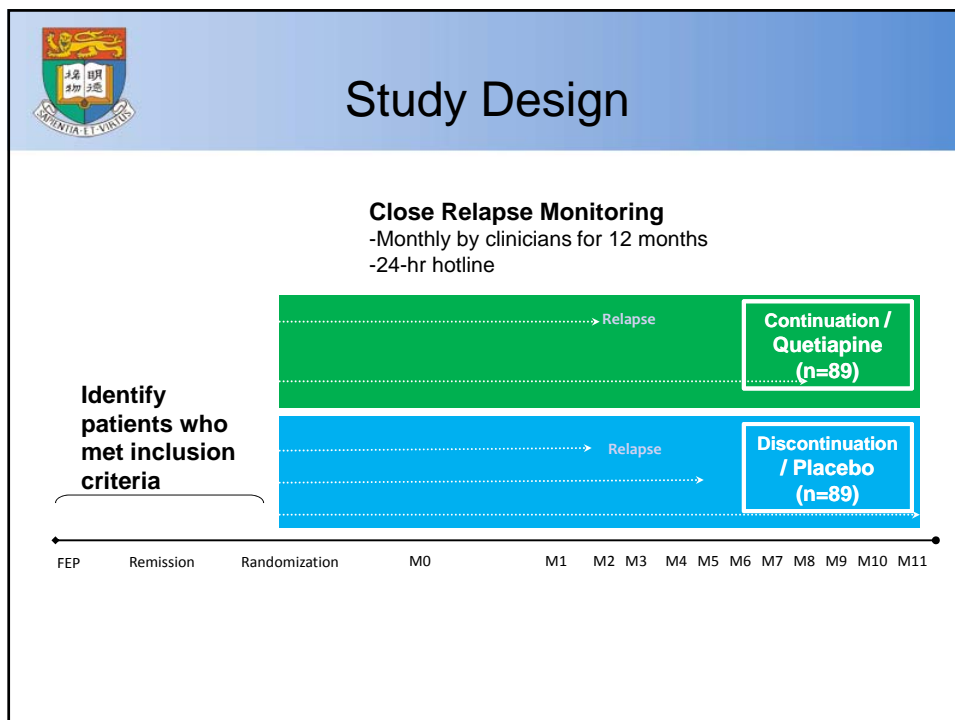
## Study Population

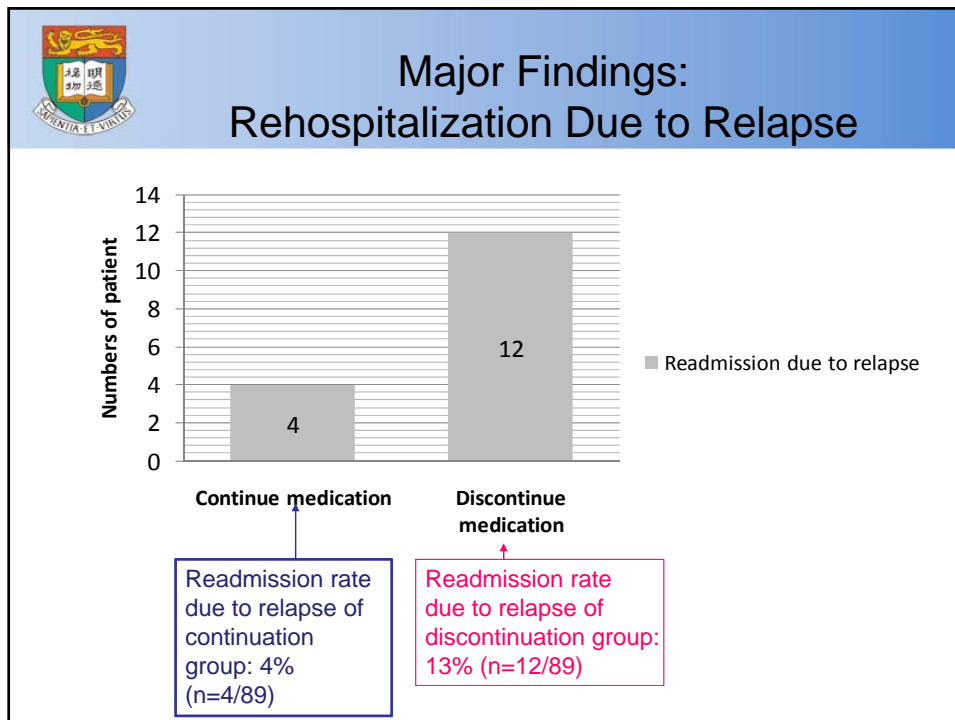
- Identified patients from the Early Assessment Service for Young People with Psychosis service of the Hospital Authority (EASY service) who had:
  - Recovered well from a single episode of psychosis
  - Psychotic symptoms completely resolved
  - Received medication for at least 1 year (mean 21 months)
  - Good functioning in the community / high proportion (71%) employed



## Study Design

- 178 patients are identified and randomised into two groups:
  - Continued to receive medications (quetiapine 400mg)
  - Discontinued medication and received placebo
- Both groups are under close relapse monitoring by clinicians for 12 months on a monthly basis, and also access to 24-hour hotline





- Summary of Major Findings**
- Higher relapse rate at 12-month in the discontinuation group (79%) than in the continuation group (41%)
  - **i.e. maintenance in medication can help reducing the risk of relapses to almost a half**
  - Higher readmission rate due to relapse in the discontinuation group (13%) than in the continuation group (4%)



## Overall Common Relapse Symptoms

- The most common relapsing symptoms:
  - Delusions 72%
  - Hallucinations 54%
  - Suspiciousness 38%
  - Conceptual disorganisation 30%
  - Unusual thought content 23%
- 68% (55/81) of patients had 2 or more types of psychotic symptoms



## Significant Predictors for Relapse

- 21% of patients remained relapse-free one year following medication discontinuation
- Previous personality, functioning, as well as clinical features, were proved to be significant predictors of relapse



## Clinical Recommendations

For patients who recovered well from first episode psychosis and their families:

- Continue with treatment for 2 years
- Take into account the relapse risks found in this study
- Discontinuation is best managed under specialized professional care
- At the earliest sign of relapse, arrange for early resumption of medication



## Clinical Recommendations

For Clinicians:

- Spend time to openly discuss with patients about their wish to discontinue medication
- Inform them about the relative risks as found in this study
- Or patients who wish to discontinue medication, they should be supported by specialized early psychosis services



## Clinical Recommendations

### For Hospital Authority:

- Provide adequate clinical time and manpower for early intervention for supporting patients in managing relapse and maintenance treatment



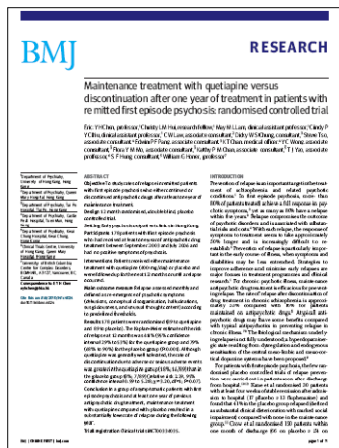
## Research Team

- Psychosis Studies and Intervention Unit of the Department of Psychiatry, HKU
- EASY Service (Hospital Authority Early Assessment Service for Young People with Psychosis)
  - Castle Peak Hospital, Kowloon Hospital, Kwai Chung Hospital, Queen Mary Hospital and Tai Po Hospital
- Dr TJ Yao, Clinical Trials Centre, HKU
- Prof William G Honer, University of British Columbia, Canada





- Results of the study are recently published in the “British Medical Journal” (BMJ, 2010;341:c4024)



Thank You