

What role does substance abuse play in catatonia?

Dr. Dhossche:

There's no difference in the presentation. They meet criteria for catatonia, so they become mute or stop eating, stop drinking, get very slow in their movements, have repetitive movements, repeat back, I mean, the echolalia, echopraxia phenomena are there.

It's the same picture, but before they became sick, they were normal. They were using marijuana with adulterants in it. Spice, I don't know, LSD, mushrooms, and then this happens — catatonia appears. So it's the same symptomatology, just the etiology is toxic.

Basically, it's a toxic substance, and you don't have histories of autism, no histories of psychotic-like episodes. They're normal kids. And they present with onset of catatonia. When the catatonia disappears, they're back to normal. So, they're back to their old self. You expect full recovery.

Basically, these are toxic syndromes, and substance-induced. We've seen several of them, and people think they use plain cannabis, but there are a lot of other things that are in there these days: fentanyl, I don't know, mushrooms, psychedelic stuff. Chemical stuff. We called it "spice" in Mississippi.

In a way, it's a positive thing that if it happens and you do expect full recovery, then sometimes you hope it's substance-induced because you know there is no underlying mood or psychotic or autistic syndrome. So you expect full recovery.