Paranoia and self-concepts in psychosis: A systematic review of the literature

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The purpose of the present study was to review systematically, research exploring the relationship between self-concepts and paranoia in psychosis. A literature search was performed by two independent raters in relevant databases (MedLine, PsychInfo and Web of Science) and articles meeting the inclusion criteria were cross-referenced. Following scrutiny according to inclusion criteria, eighteen studies were selected for review. A narrative synthesis of findings, in which methodological variability is discussed, is presented relative to three key areas: the nature of the relationship between paranoia and self-concepts; the association between paranoia and discrepancies in self-concepts; the nature of the relationship between paranoia and self-concepts when other, dimensional aspects of these constructs are taken into account. The systematic literature review indicated relatively consistent findings, that paranoia is associated with more negative self-concepts when measured cross-sectionally. Results are somewhat more mixed in regards to research on paranoia and self-concept discrepancies. Studies investigating dimensional aspects of self-concepts and paranoia yield findings of particular interest, especially in regards to the association indicated between instability of self-concepts and paranoia. Limitations in research and of the present systematic review are discussed. Clinical and theoretical implications of findings are outlined and possible directions for future research are suggested.