

Patient Talk!



The International Council of Nurses
Informed Patient Project

Targeting Mental Health

Facts and Figures

- About one-fifth of the world's youth suffer from mild to severe mental health disorders.
- Mental disorders represent more than 12% of the total burden of disease.
- 450 million people suffer from a mental or behavioural problem.

What is mental health?

Mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders. It involves a state of well-being whereby the individual recognises their abilities, is able to cope with the normal stresses of life, works productively and contributes to the community.

How common are mental health problems?

450 million people suffer from a mental or behavioural problem and nearly one million people commit suicide every year. Depression, alcohol use disorders, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder are among the ten leading causes of disability worldwide.

Severe mental health problems, such as schizophrenia, are relatively rare affecting around one in 200 adults each year. However, in the UK, depression, anxiety and phobias can affect up to one in six of the population at any one time.¹

The stigma of mental illness

Adults with mental health problems are one of the most disadvantaged groups in society. Although many want to work, fewer than a quarter actually do, the lowest employment rate for any of the main groups of disabled people. Too often they do not have other activities to fill their days and spend their time alone.

Social isolation is an important risk factor for deteriorating mental health and suicide. Two-thirds of men under the age of 35 who die by suicide are unemployed.²

Unlike those with physical illness, people with mental health problems are generally subjected to stigma, prejudice and exclusion from access to social services and health care. Stigma is often due to public ignorance about the underlying causes of mental health problems. Often the stigma can be worse than the illness. One of the main challenges is to remove the stigma of mental illness so that people will talk freely about their emotional problems with health care professionals.

How can I help a friend or relative with a mental disorder?

- Encourage them to seek help from a health professional. Remind them that this is a legitimate illness and there is a treatment. The sooner the disorder is diagnosed, the sooner they will be on the road to recovery.
- Learn about the illness and what effects it may have.
- Be positive about the future and help the person become independent.
- Look after yourself and seek help when needed by finding support groups in your area.³
- Help stop the stigma of mental disorders by raising awareness of the danger of stereotypes. Be a media watchdog and call attention to the use of words which add to the misunderstanding of mental illness.⁴

¹ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Social Exclusion Unit, UK (2005).

² Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Social Exclusion Unit, UK (2005).

³ Mental Health Association NSW, www.mentalhealth.asn.au/home.htm

⁴ Canadian Mental health Association, www.cmha.ca

The logo for Johnson & Johnson, featuring the company name in a red, cursive script font with a small ampersand between the two 'Johnson' words.

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