

The Barriers to Recovery Survey

A new survey conducted by the National Mental Health Association (NMHA), *Barriers to Recovery*, revealed that people with schizophrenia and the family and friends who act as their caregivers recognize stigma as a formidable barrier to improved quality of life, as well as stigma's compounding effect on access to important services and treatments. The survey also recognizes several specific needs that must be addressed in order to break down these barriers and improve people's quality of life.



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Executive Summary

Survey Findings

NMHA commissioned the *Barriers to Recovery* survey to determine the core barriers to an improved quality of life for people with schizophrenia and their caregivers. Three key barriers were identified – stigma, inadequate insurance coverage, and lack of access to appropriate services and treatments. In the survey, people with schizophrenia and their caregivers rated their quality of life significantly lower than the broader public – only 23 percent of people with schizophrenia claimed to be very satisfied with life compared with 64 percent of the general public.

Stigma is pervasive: Fifty-eight percent of people with schizophrenia and 47 percent of caregivers believe schizophrenia can be treated, compared with only 27 percent of the general public. In fact, with access to appropriate treatment and services most people with a mental illness, including schizophrenia, will recover.

Insurance is inadequate: Only half of people with schizophrenia (52 percent) and one-fifth of caregivers (21 percent) agree that insurance coverage for mental illnesses is as good as coverage for physical illnesses.

Services, treatments are available, but often inappropriate, inaccessible: Less than half (48 percent) of people with schizophrenia surveyed think adequate services exist for people with mental illness, and only one-third (35 percent) of caregivers feel families dealing with mental illness have access to adequate services. The severe side effects associated with many medications often diminish quality of life for people with schizophrenia – 72 percent of people with schizophrenia said side effects significantly impact their lives, and 75 percent said side effects force them to switch medications.

Conclusions

People with schizophrenia and their caregivers face significant quality of life issues on a daily basis, and their caregivers suffer emotionally and financially as well. Fortunately, the top needs for people with schizophrenia and their caregivers have the potential to be improved through public education, improved insurance coverage via mental health parity legislation, and access to the newest services and treatments.

Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted from October 29 through December 19, 2002 by Harris Interactive Inc. Harris completed ten-minute telephone interviews with 1,087 adults age 18 and older. Of the respondents, 403 were at least somewhat aware of mental illnesses, weighted to be representative of the randomly occurring population as determined by a pre-screening. In addition, 202 participants knew someone with a mental illness other than schizophrenia, 201 knew someone with schizophrenia and 200 were unpaid caregivers for someone with schizophrenia. Also, 81 participants diagnosed with schizophrenia were recruited through the NMHA network.

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