



Facts about SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS

What is severe mental illness?

Severe mental illness is a term used to describe several different types of brain disorders that cause disturbances in thinking, mood and behavior.

The medical diagnoses most often considered as severe mental illnesses include:

- Major Depression
- Bipolar Disorder
- Schizophrenia and Schizo-affective Disorder

Because the symptoms of severe mental illness persist over long periods of time, persons with severe mental illness usually experience disability in one or more areas of their lives.

Severe mental illness can cause those who suffer from it to have impaired functioning in almost any of the following areas:

- functioning in society and in traditional roles (parent, spouse, employee)
- ability to have satisfying relationships with other people
- ability to take care of daily, routine tasks such as grooming, eating; physical functioning
- ability to remember, reason and think clearly

Are there treatments for severe mental illness?

There are effective treatments available for persons who suffer from all forms of severe mental illness. Usually treatment involves some type of medication along with counseling, psychotherapy and psychiatric rehabilitation.

Medications prescribed for severe mental illness alter the brain's chemistry and help to decrease the symptoms of the illness that are so distressing and disruptive.

Counseling and psychotherapy help persons with severe mental illness and their family understand and accept the illness. Therapy helps the individual recover his/her self-esteem.

Psychiatric rehabilitation helps persons with severe mental illness learn the necessary skills to live, learn, work and socialize in ways that make them feel satisfied and successful.

Many times, persons with a severe mental illness require hospitalization for treatment when the symptoms are very intense.

Self-help and consumer/family advocacy groups also play an important role in helping persons recover from severe mental illness.

For more information, call:

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