



Mood Disorders Society of Canada

Société pour les troubles de l'humeur du Canada

www.mooddorderscanada.ca

Guelph, ON, November 15, 2011

Pan-Canadian Survey Raises Warning About Mental Health Services

The Canadian health care system continues to critically underperform for individuals with mental illnesses according to the findings of the September 2011 pan-Canadian survey of the mental health community by Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC).

Background

The survey was circulated to approximately 10,000 people within the MDSC network and was subsequently circulated to their respective networks. The survey received a remarkable 3,125 responses. Over 500 individuals provided additional written comments to questions in the survey.

The results of the survey tell us that while there has been some improvement in the various federal and provincial mental health care systems, there are many areas where improvements are desperately needed. What was made abundantly clear by the respondents is that significant gaps and shortages continue to be ignored by mental health policy makers throughout Canada.

Of particular concern to MDSC;

- 35% of the respondents indicate having to wait more than 12 months for a diagnosis. Comments cited the shortage of professionals available to diagnose and treat individuals with mental health issues.
- 52% of respondents reported visiting a hospital emergency room because of their mental illness and 50% of those respondents indicated that they were “moderately” to “extremely dissatisfied” with the care they received at the emergency room of which 24% indicated they were “extremely dissatisfied”.
- 59% of respondents reported that uninsured services prevented them from seeking the type of support they needed such as health care services from a therapist, psychologist, alternative health care provider, or other.
- 82% of respondents indicated they were able to access the medications they needed to treat their mental illness. However, some of the respondents indicated that this meant going into debt, rationing drugs, and staying in stressful situations to take advantage of benefits programs.

- 65% of respondents indicated that their local hospital did not provide adequate care for patients with mental illness. The number one reason cited was that the hospital “does not seem to prioritize mental illness”. Clinics and hospital emergency rooms are not well equipped to deal with individuals presenting with a serious mental illness. In hospitals, individuals reported they were left to wait unacceptably long periods of time, often in a state of psychosis with potential suicidal tendencies.
- On a positive note, 91% of respondents with a mental illness had a family doctor, 52% saw their family doctor for their mental illness and 46% were “very” to “extremely satisfied” with their family doctor for treating their mental illness.

Moving Forward

The survey clearly indicates that the status quo is no longer acceptable to Canadians immersed and treated in our country’s mental health system. Canadians are undoubtedly calling for proactive action and change on these major, systemic issues identified in this national survey. The highest percentage of respondents, 41%, indicated that “increased funding for mental health services” was the issue that government must act upon immediately. When asked directly, the majority of respondents, 56%, reported that their number one funding priority was to shorten wait times to get mental health services (from patient request to time of receipt of services).

About Mood Disorders Society of Canada

Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) is a national, not-for-profit, consumer-driven, voluntary health charity committed to ensuring that the voices of consumers, family members and caregivers are heard on issues relating to mental health and mental illness; and in particular with regard to depression, bipolar illness and other associated mood disorders.

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For further information:

Read the full report at: www.mooddisorderscanada.ca

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