

# Profile of Older People with Mental Illness – Myths and Perceptions

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# Old Age and Mental illness

- Old age is often the period of life that people report the lowest rates of mental disorders
- Most older people adapt very well to the ageing process
- Physically healthy older people have low rates of mental illness and high rates of life satisfaction

# Mental Disorders in Late Life

## Affective Disorders

Significant Depressive Symptoms 20%

Major Depression 3%

Mania/Hypomania 0.5%

**Anxiety Disorders** 5-15%

(includes phobias, OCD, PTSD, Panic disorder)

**Psychoses** 1-2%

Schizophrenia 1%

**Alcohol Use Disorders** 3-4% male, 1% female

**Dementia** 8.8% aged 65+

# Early Onset Chronic Psychiatric Disorders

## Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder, Depression

- Ageing is often associated with a decrease in the acuity of psychotic illnesses and improved self-management
- However years of serious mental illness are often associated with poor social networks, limited family supports, limited finances
- Physical health is affected – shorter life expectancy, high rates of obesity, diabetes, cardiorespiratory disorders (smoking)
- High rates of mild cognitive impairment
- ‘Prematurely ageing’

# Late onset psychiatric disorders

Depression, Bipolar disorder, Psychoses

- Often have medical (especially neurological) factors in their aetiology
- Sensory and functional impairments common
- May be associated with mild cognitive impairment
- Can be a prodrome to dementia over the subsequent 3-5 years
- Usually recurrent disorders, sometimes chronic & unremitting

# Needs of Older People with Mental Illness

- Adequate service planning requires an understanding of the needs of the target population
- Needs include those related to physical and mental health, accommodation, food, finances, social and personal relationships.
- Needs can be differentiated into met or unmet needs – not all unmet need can be met
- Emerging evidence indicates that meeting patient-rated unmet needs should be the starting point for mental healthcare (Slade et al 2005)

# Needs of Older People with Mental Illness

- Older people with mental illness have complex needs due to:
  - Medical comorbidities especially the geriatric syndromes e.g. instability (falls), incontinence, frailty, prone to polypharmacy
  - Functional impairment
  - Cognitive impairment
  - Carer issues and social support
  - Many require comprehensive geriatric assessments and multimodal interventions

# Needs assessment – the CANE

- Camberwell Assessment of Need for the Elderly (CANE) is a standardised needs assessment tool derived from the CAN
- It has 24 items covering the full range of needs
- The tool includes the views of consumers, carers and service providers
- We used the CANE on 97 mental health patients aged 50 years and over (53 aged 65+) in South East Sydney (Futera & Draper, 2012)
- Tellingly, only 11 had carers available to complete their section



# Needs of People aged over 50 with Chronic Mental Illness in South East Sydney

(Futeran & Draper, 2012)

Types of Needs on CANE	Patient (n = 97)		Key Worker (n = 92)		Researcher (n = 97)	
	Needs per patient	Met (%)	Needs per patient	Met (%)	Needs per patient	Met (%)
Home /Food	1.0	81	1.1	70	1.2	70
Medical	2.2	96	2.2	95	2.4	94
Psychiatric	1.4	83	2.0	84	2.1	86
Social	0.8	42	1.2	33	1.3	34
Financial	0.3	100	0.4	97	0.4	98
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>76</b>

# Type of Mental Illness & Needs

(Futeran & Draper, 2012)

Diagnosis	Researcher rated CANE		Key Worker rated CANE		Patient rated CANE	
	Needs per person	% met Need	Needs per person	% met Need	Needs per person	% met Need
Schizophrenia (N = 50)	7.8	70%	7.0	69%	5.7	78%
Schizoaffective disorder (N = 10)	7.9	80%	7.6	79%	6.3	85%
Bipolar disorder (N = 14)	7.6	88%	7.3	86%	5.6	91%
Unipolar depression (N = 23)	7.4	79%	7.3	82%	5.9	85%

# Summary

- Older people with chronic serious mental illness
  - Have around **a third** of their **social** needs being met
  - Have about **two thirds** of their **accommodation/food** needs being met
  - **Underestimate** their level of need by around **25%**

# Needs of Other Mental Disorders

- Chronic 'minor' depression
  - Often accompanies chronic disability, chronic pain, social isolation, loneliness
- Alcohol Use Disorders
  - High falls risk, cognitive disorders, behavioural disorders, other substance use disorders
- Anxiety Disorders
  - Agoraphobia often associated with 'fear of falling' e.g. after a stroke
  - Poor recovery from acute physical illness
  - Benzodiazepine dependence

# How can we reduce the level of unmet need?

- Better advocacy to assist this marginalised group
- Better identify the full range of needs of older people with chronic mental illness
- Most unmet need is social and functional & could be met with appropriate services
- Remove barriers to those with mental illness being able to access aged care services to meet these needs
- Develop partnerships between service providers, carers and consumers

Thank you.....

Any questions?

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