



# MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AND ILLNESSES

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# THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

- A mental illness/ disorder is a health issue that significantly affects a person's feelings, behaviours, thoughts and interactions with other people, and is diagnosed according to a set of criteria.
- A mental health problem can also affect a person's thoughts, feelings, behaviours and interactions with others, but generally in a less severe way. Mental illness can have a severe and lasting impact on a person's life, as well as those around them.
- Examples of mental health problems and illnesses include:
  - ☐ Depression
  - ☐ **Schizophrenia** (affects the normal functioning of the brain. It is characterised by psychotic symptoms and a reduced range of expressions of emotion)
  - ☐ personality disorders
  - ☐ major depression
  - ☐ post-traumatic stress disorder.
- These illnesses cause much suffering for those directly affected and often for their family/carers and social network.

# WHAT IS THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

- Depression:
  - Experienced by one in seven Australians during their life and the most common mental health issue in young Australians.
  - Third highest burden of disease in Australia.
  - Depression is the largest cause of non-fatal disability.
  - Expected by the WHO to be the leading health issue in the world by 2030.
- Suicide:
  - Leading cause of death for Australians aged 15–24.
  - Every day six Australians commit suicide and 30 more attempt it unsuccessfully.
  - There are higher rates of suicide among men than women (men = 76.9 per cent).
- Bipolar
  - Generally there is a significant time gap between the first episode and diagnosis.
  - Bipolar disorders may affect up to 6 per cent of the population but to varying degrees.
- Overall, mortality is slowly decreasing whereas the morbidity is increasing.

# RISK FACTORS/PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Risk Factors

- Having a blood relative, such as a parent or sibling, with a mental illness
- Stressful life situations, such as financial problems, a loved one's death or a divorce
- An ongoing (chronic) medical condition, such as diabetes
- Brain damage as a result of a serious injury (traumatic brain injury), such as a violent blow to the head
- Traumatic experiences, such as military combat or being assaulted
- Use of alcohol or recreational drugs
- Being abused or neglected as a child
- A previous mental illness
- Social isolation
- Physical illness
- unemployment
- family dysfunction/history

- Protective Factors:

- Effective clinical care for mental, physical and drug abuse problem
- Easy access to variety of clinical interventions and support groups
- Strong family connections or connections with other friends or work colleagues
- Enhancing resilience and skills in problem solving
- Early detection and treatment for mental health problems
- Restricted access to means of harming yourself, such as prescription medications and firearms

# SOCIOCULTURAL/SOCIOECONOMIC/ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINANTS

- Determinants include:
  - ☐ Relationships with family and friends where positive relationships reduce risk of illness and negative relationships increase risk of illness
  - ☐ People with low socioeconomic status/ unemployment can lead to a sense of hopelessness and despair which can increase the risk of mental illness and more likely to miss use drugs.
  - ☐ Have less access to mental health services, increasing their risk
  - ☐ Rural and remote areas: increase risk of mental illness as they have less support networks and services

# GROUPS AT RISK

- ATSI people usually with drug/alcohol problems
  - Family history
  - Experienced traumas
  - Personality types e.g. perfectionist
  - Low socioeconomic status
  - People suffering chronic depression
- Elderly people
  - People with a physical illness, particularly a terminal illness
  - Alcoholics
  - People who have made previous suicide attempts
  - People who talk about ending their lives
  - Teenagers, particularly those for whom life seems to be worthless
  - Young gay and lesbian people

# MENTAL HEALTH VIDEOS

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54sDdNa9vek>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCqm0V8nerY>