

CAREGIVING AND SCHIZOPHRENIA: NEW SURVEY REVEALS SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON CAREGIVERS' QUALITY OF LIFE

~ Almost half of caregivers surveyed are concerned about their ability to balance their loved one's needs with their own ~

Toronto, ON (October 15, 2012) – According to Ontario survey results, caregivers play an important role in supporting their loved ones with schizophrenia – emotionally, financially and socially – resulting in feelings of burden for a third of caregivers surveyed.¹ Daily life is significantly affected by caring for a loved one with schizophrenia, with many caregivers reporting impacts on their careers (34 per cent),⁴ relationships with family and friends (54 per cent),¹ and in some cases their own personal health (50 per cent).⁴ More than half of the caregivers surveyed feel frustrated (61 per cent), and around half of the caregivers feel sad (49 per cent), overwhelmed (47 per cent) and inadequate (43 per cent).¹

Despite the impact on caregivers' daily lives, survey results reveal that they are positive about the difference they are making in their loved one's life, with more than 92 per cent believing their sacrifices are worthwhile and 77 per cent feeling proud about the support they provide.¹

“It is encouraging to see the positive outlook caregivers have, despite the many sacrifices they make in their own lives and the emotional toll they experience,” Chris Summerville, CEO of the Schizophrenia Society of Canada. “An involved caregiver can make a substantial difference in ensuring good outcomes for the patient.”

CAREGIVERS: COMMITTED AND ACTIVE DAY-TO-DAY

Daily life is significantly impacted for caregivers supporting loved ones with schizophrenia. According to the survey, caregivers devote 20 hours a week to caregiving, which resulted in missed days at work for nearly half of caregivers surveyed (43 per cent), with more than 30 per cent missing a total of 30 days.¹

Day-to-day responsibilities for caregivers include transportation assistance (65 per cent), meal preparation (49 per cent), monitoring medication usage (49 per cent), maintaining a living space (48 per cent), and financial support, with caregivers covering 30 per cent of their loved one's expenses.¹

In addition to daily support provided, caregivers assume a great deal of responsibility for their loved one's overall health. This includes staying up-to-date on the latest information about schizophrenia (63 per cent), attending doctor appointments on a monthly basis (34 per cent), and ensuring their loved one takes his or her medication. Half of those surveyed (49 per cent) agree that they ensure on a daily or weekly basis that their loved one takes the correct medication at the right time, and four-in-ten say they are frequently concerned about whether or not their loved one has taken his or her medication.¹

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“With a mental disorder like schizophrenia, caregivers often find themselves managing their loved one’s treatment regimens,” says Dr. Ruth Baruch, a Toronto psychiatrist. “There are different treatment options available, including some that can be administered less frequently, reducing the daily burden of making sure the patient is taking his or her medication properly. By engaging in open conversations with doctors about the burden of care, caregivers can effectively partner with doctors to ensure their loved one’s schizophrenia is optimally managed, so that some of the burden can be reduced and quality of life can be improved for both the caregiver and patient.”

WORKING TOGETHER FOR OPTIMAL MANAGEMENT

Nearly 70 per cent of caregivers surveyed recognize the important role they play in overall patient recovery and nearly the same percentage feel that their loved one appreciates the support they provide.¹

“Recovery has different meanings for different people,” says Mr. Summerville. “With schizophrenia, recovery is often about optimal management and learning how to live well with the condition. For those with schizophrenia and their loved ones, it’s about self-determination, choice, hope and empowerment.”

For Lesley Skelly, a caregiver in Toronto, optimal management is the end goal for everyone in the family. “Our family is in this together,” says Lesley. “As a caregiver, I know I play a particularly important role in supporting my child and ensuring their schizophrenia is well-managed. It’s a full-time job, but with the support of family and friends I am able to do it.”

For more information and helpful resources for caregivers, visit http://www.schizophrenia.ca/journey_to_recovery.php, to access the Schizophrenia Society of Canada’s Guide to Assessment and Treatment.

ABOUT SCHIZOPHRENIA

Schizophrenia is a chronic and serious disease of the brain. It is a psychotic disorder that interferes with a person’s ability to think clearly, manage emotions, make decisions and relate to others.² The disease involves a loss of contact with reality, making it very difficult for a person to distinguish between what is real and what is not.² Schizophrenia impairs a person’s ability to function to their potential when it is not treated.² In Ontario, 46,000 people have been diagnosed with schizophrenia.³ Finding the right medication is one important aspect of symptom management, but other services are also needed in order to promote recovery. Rehabilitation strategies involving work, school and relationship goals are also essential and need to be addressed in creating a plan of care.²

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ABOUT THE CARE SURVEY

The survey was conducted from August 16 to September 6, 2012 by Vision Critical. The survey was administered online in Ontario among 98 men and women who provide non-paid care to schizophrenia patients, and who were recruited from Vision Critical's online research panel, the Angus Reid Forum. The margin of error, which measures sampling variability, is +/- 9.9% points, 19 times out of 20.

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References:

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- ¹ Schizophrenia Awareness Month Research. The survey was conducted from August 16 to September 6, 2012 by Vision Critical.
 - ² Schizophrenia Society of Canada. http://www.schizophrenia.ca/learn_more_about_schizophrenia.php#1.
 - ³ Canadian Mental Health Association. http://durham.cmha.ca/mental_health/schizophrenia/.
 - ⁴ Schizophrenia Awareness Month Research. The survey was conducted from August 16 to September 6, 2012 by Vision Critical. Table 65, Q.18.
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