



Mental health: Fighting the stigma

People with mental illness are often victims of prejudice, which is usually the result of ignorance and the many misconceptions about mental health and mental illness. The stigmatization only adds to the suffering and limitations that people with mental illness have to face, and it can lead to their social exclusion.

Mental illnesses are not personal weaknesses. The word says it all—they are illnesses and they can be treated. Information is the best weapon against preconceptions about mental illness.

Here are some facts:

- Early 1 in 6 people will suffer from some form of mental illness in their lifetime. Mental illness is quite common, with mental disorders representing nearly 20% of our society's disease burden and ranking second, compared to 23% for cardiovascular disease and 11% for cancer.
- The majority of people suffering from mental illness don't seek help. Nearly 2/3 of people suffering from mental illness will not seek the help they need because of the stigma attached to it. What's more, almost 42% of people with a mental illness are afraid to tell their family about it for fear of being judged.
- Mental illness is the leading cause of absenteeism in the workplace. Almost 50% of absences from work are linked to some form of mental illness.
- There are more victims of depression than of road accidents. More people die in Québec as a result of depression-related suicide (about 950 per year) than from car accidents (about 600 per year). In fact, 80% of suicide victims suffered from depression.

Here are some misconceptions:

- People who have low self-esteem or lazy tendencies are at higher risk.
No one is any more or less susceptible to mental illness. Anyone can be affected.
- The majority of violent crimes are committed by people with a mental illness.
Contrary to popular belief and despite the picture often portrayed by the media covering violent crimes, people afflicted with mental illness are not violently inclined. In fact, those suffering from mental illness are at much greater risk of being victims of violent acts than perpetrators of violence.
- There is nothing you can do to help someone you know who has a mental illness.
Family, friends, and colleagues play a significant role in helping someone with a mental illness in their recovery. The support of a loved one can make all the difference.
- Antidepressants are addictive.
To this day there is no proof that antidepressant medication is addictive.

(Source : www.msss.gouv.qc.ca)

World Health Day – April 7, 2013



World Health
Organization

World Health Day is celebrated on **7 April** to mark the anniversary of the founding of WHO in 1948. Each year a theme is selected for World Health Day that highlights a priority area of public health concern in the world.

The theme for 2013 is **high blood pressure**:

High blood pressure – also known as raised blood pressure or hypertension – increases the risk of heart attacks, strokes and kidney failure. If left uncontrolled, high blood pressure can also cause blindness, irregularities of the heartbeat and heart failure. The risk of developing these complications is higher in the presence of other cardiovascular risk factors such as diabetes. One in three adults worldwide has high blood pressure. The proportion increases with age, from 1 in 10 people in their 20s and 30s to 5 in 10 people in their 50s.

However, high blood pressure is both preventable and treatable. The risk of developing high blood pressure can be reduced by:

- reducing salt intake;
- eating a balanced diet;
- avoiding harmful use of alcohol;
- taking regular physical activity;
- maintaining a healthy body weight; and
- avoiding tobacco use.

Source: (www.who.int)