

Survey Results - Australia

Keeping Care Complete is the first international survey of family caregivers for individuals with bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder. One hundred caregivers in Australia were amongst 982 people from around the world to participate in this survey.

Family caregivers are at the heart of the recovery process

The greatest per centage of caregivers surveyed (63 per cent) were the parent of an individual with a serious mental illness. 16 per cent were the spouse, 5 per cent were a sibling and 14 per cent were an adult son or daughter.

A majority of caregivers (80 per cent) said they were the primary caregiver for their loved one. Sixty-two per cent of respondents said they contributed to treatment decisions and 65 per cent said they accompanied their family member during visits with doctors.

Family caregivers want complete care and long-term wellness for their loved ones

All caregivers (100 per cent) said the goal of treatment should be to maintain wellness, defined as the condition of both good physical and mental health.

Almost all caregivers (97 per cent) said family support is a key factor that keeps their family member well. Other factors contributing to wellness were social support (38 per cent), exercise (49 per cent), diet and nutrition (36 per cent), having responsibilities (26 per cent), talk therapy (16 per cent) and having a stable schedule (13 per cent).

Seventy-five per cent of caregivers said doctors should focus on long-term care rather than managing crisis situations. Almost all respondents (92 per cent) agreed that wellness programs are valuable in helping their family member manage their symptoms.

Relapse is devastating for families

Of the caregivers who said their family member experienced a relapse, 86 per cent said their loved ones were hospitalised, 37 per cent said they were unable to work, 28 per cent said they tried to commit suicide and 22 per cent said their family member was imprisoned as a result of a relapse.

Many caregivers (69 per cent) said they always or often worry about their family member experiencing a relapse and many others (89 per cent) said their own mental and physical health worsened following their family member's relapse.

Effective treatment benefits the whole family

Caregivers who said their relative is currently satisfied with their medication said that their family member is now able to re-engage with family and friends (82 per cent), perform daily tasks more independently (75 per cent), stay out of the hospital (88 per cent), hold a steady job/volunteer (27 per cent) and learn a new skill/attend a class (19 per cent).

Family members' wellness and improvement of symptoms helped decrease caregivers' stress levels (88 per cent) and interpersonal tension (87 per cent), while also increasing the amount of quality time spent with the family (81 per cent).