

Survey Results - Canada

Keeping Care Complete is the first international survey to shed light on experiences and insights of family caregivers of individuals with bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder. One hundred ninety-nine caregivers in Canada were among the 982 caregivers from around the world to participate in this survey.

Family caregivers are at the heart of the recovery process

The greatest percentage of caregivers surveyed (23 per cent) were the spouse or a sibling of an individual with a serious mental illness. Of the other caregivers, 20 per cent were the parent and 18 per cent were an adult son or daughter.

Almost half of caregivers (46 per cent) said they were the primary caregiver for their loved one. Sixty-five per cent said they weighed in on 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

Almost all caregivers (99 per cent) said the goal of treatment should be to maintain wellness, defined as the condition of both good physical and mental health.

Almost half of caregivers (47 per cent) said family support is a key factor that keeps their family member well. Other factors contributing to wellness were social support (18 per cent), talk therapy (14 per cent), exercise (14 per cent), having

responsibilities (12 per cent) and diet and nutrition (10 per cent). Seventy-six per cent said doctors should focus on long-term care rather than managing crisis situations, while 77 per cent strongly 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, 84 per cent said that their loved ones were unable to work, 54 per cent said they were hospitalized, 25 per cent said they tried to commit suicide and 14 per cent said their family member was imprisoned as a result of a relapse.

About half of caregivers (51 per cent) said they always or often worry about their family member experiencing a relapse, 30 per cent said it disrupted their life substantially and 12 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 (89 per cent), stay out of the hospital (89 per cent), perform daily tasks more independently (84 per cent), learn a new skill/attend a class (51 per cent) and hold a steady job/volunteer (47 per cent).

Family members' wellness and improvement of symptoms helped decrease caregivers' stress levels (82 per cent) and interpersonal tension (75 per cent), while also increasing the amount of quality time spent with the family (84 per cent).