

Statistics at Your Fingertips – New Pocketbook Shows Economic Burden of Mental Illness



The Alberta Mental Health Board and the Institute of Health Economics have jointly released the *Mental Health Economic Statistics* booklet, a first of its kind publication that provides information about the economic burden of mental illness.

The new and innovative publication – presented in easy-to-reference, clear and concise pocketbook style – emphasizes three central themes in its data compilation:

- 1) the burden of mental illness and how Canada compares to other countries on some indicators; and
- 2) resources that are currently being used to address this burden; and
- 3) the performance of Canada's mental health system in the allocation of these resources.

As the booklet shows what is currently taking place on a provincial, national and international level, it will enable policy makers and planners to gain a much broader economic perspective on the current mental health system, reduce the social and economic burdens of mental illness and improve the overall mental health system.

For copies of the pocketbook call (780) 448-4881.

Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Training Opportunity in Mental Health

Recruitment is currently underway for an individual to take part in a six-month full-time skills development opportunity. This position is open to candidates from research, policy making and service-setting arenas, and will provide the opportunity to transfer newfound knowledge and skills into their work setting.

The pilot project is a result of a partnership between the AMHB and the HTA unit at the Institute for Health Economics (IHE) to build capacity for applied HTA mental health research in Alberta. This initiative will explore ways in which mental health systems and services delivery can be improved, and evidence better integrated into policy, decision-making, and practice.

The project will focus on one of the four priority areas detailed in the Mental Health Research Partnership Program for Alberta:

- Child and adolescent mental health
- Mental health in the workplace
- Mental illness and addictions
- Effectiveness of mental health services and system

For more details on this opportunity, or to submit an application, please contact:

Dr. Hannah Pazderka–Robinson at hannah.pazderka-robinson@amhb.ab.ca.

Summer Employment Research Program Gets Strong Support

Launched last spring, the ASERP Pilot program offers subsidized wages for mental health service organizations to employ students to work on projects related to mental health research, evaluation and quality improvement.

Sixteen university students interested in mental health were employed over the summer by regional health authorities and non-profit organizations to participate in research and evaluation activities such as: data entry, collection and analysis, literature reviews, instrument testing and research dissemination. Preliminary program evaluation results indicate that the initiative achieved its main objectives of building mental health research capacity, training the next generation of mental health research/evaluation professionals and increasing awareness of mental health issues.

Comments received from evaluation interviews are extremely positive. Several participants emphasized that the program provided support to do worthwhile projects that might not have otherwise been completed and others indicated that they were pleased to have the opportunity to engage with students considering future careers in the field of mental health. Overall, both students and employers clearly benefited from participating in the program.

A final evaluation report and will be posted on the AMHB website in December:
www.amhb.ab.ca/What_We_Do/research/default.asp.

The 2006 Mental Health Research Showcase – A Success!

The Alberta Mental Health Board (AMHB) partnered with B.C. Mental Health and Addictions Services to deliver an engaging program to an audience of over 400 participants. The Showcase conference opened with a compelling presentation by Jane Pauley, former anchor of NBC's *Today Show*, *Nightly News* and *Dateline*. Ms. Pauley shared her personal experience of living with bipolar disorder with the goal of reducing the stigma associated with mental illness.

Prominent speakers from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia presented on mental health research related to: populations at risk, children and adolescents, mental illness and addictions, workplace mental health and the effectiveness of mental health systems and services. Alberta regional health authorities described service innovations followed by a panel discussion focused on finding practical ways to address the need-care gap in mental health.

A total of 118 poster presentations were on display featuring academic and practice-based mental health research. The final program, as well as abstracts and presentations, are available on the AMHB website: www.amhb.ab.ca.

For More Information

For information about mental health research program activities contact:

Edmonton: 780.422.2233
Calgary: 403.297.3678