

MENTAL ILLNESS

Hannah Stroebe

Homelessness is an issue that tends to be overlooked today. It requires a great deal of attention, especially for the mentally ill who live on the streets. They need the most care of all because their situations are far more complex and severe. It is more severe because they are not totally there mentally. They have a hard time understanding. Their brains do not work the same as a normal individual. Since they are more complex they need more support and more intense care. They need relationships where they are able to find trust. These relationships need to be deeper than the one with a psychiatrist. Also, they need support as they go through demanding times during treatment. They will go through treatment if they choose to or if they are forced to. Forcing the mentally ill is not always the best way, but it may be the only solution if the mentally ill homeless person is unable to take care of themselves. On the other hand if they choose or accept help, the process may not only be demanding like the other but long too. One thing that is key to their journey to recovery is patience from the helper. Results will not show right away, they move slow and take time, it is important to understand and to be willing to stay committed to the process. The end results will be far better than the beginning. There may be setbacks along the way which will discourage the helper, but it is important to stay committed and not push an excessive amount, even if you are impatient. Let the mentally ill develop and learn at their own pace. If you let this happen they will make the most progress. Mental illnesses are not curable, homelessness is and it can be prevented if we take action.

Kritanya Lambert

Understanding mental illness in regard to the homelessness crisis is a very complex situation that is often difficult to treat or diagnose. There are few reliable treatments and even fewer consenting patients. These combined obstacles pose a serious dilemma, in terms of offering substantial remedies to those that so need it. Administrators of our programs are still in process of experimenting with new concepts, medicines and treatments.

It is evident that much more significant funding is needed for research and administration, in order to attempt to manage and treat as many of the homeless population as possible. Each community has a responsibility and should deal with it based on the need in their area, and some funding should be made available from federal subsidy to assist communities that may not be as self sufficient. Non-profits would obviously also be hugely beneficial and give each local population an opportunity to assist and care for the issue at hand. How can we as a community, take action to stop homelessness from becoming more widespread in our area?

As responsible, involved members in the community, the movement to address the homelessness problem all starts with each individual to get connected and included in legislation, volunteerism, and donation of time, energy and money. Who as a community member would like to be involved in donation of time or energy? What do we do as a community member to get involved with volunteerism and funded programs?

Sarah Daniels

People with mental illnesses throughout the homeless population seem to be in the most need, and are provided with the least amount of options for ending their situation. My question is how can we help mentally ill homeless people if they are unable to sustain a job, and cannot afford or be responsible for an apartment?

Most service providers do not accept people with mental illnesses into their systems, because they are deemed too difficult or not ready for housing. Which leaves those that are the most vulnerable, and in the most need of help, out on the streets without a place to turn. (Lamp). There are facilities that are specifically designed for

people with mental illness, such as Lamp. Lamp's objective is to provide housing, and productive opportunities to be a part of the community, as well as to improve the overall health of Lamp's inhabitants.

Another area I would like to discuss at the Town Hall Meeting is the use of music as therapy for the mentally ill. Music therapy is a medical profession designed to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs to children and adults with disabilities or illnesses, (American Music Therapy Association). Music therapy is designed to help manage stress, alleviate pain, express feelings, enhance memory, improve communication, and helps with physical rehabilitation. People of all ages with mental health issues can benefit from music therapy, (AMTA).

Furthermore, individuals with mental illness are not at fault for the situation they are in, therefore, shouldn't the community be responsible for helping them get back on their feet? What are the next steps for helping these homeless individuals? How can we help fund these programs so that there are more programs readily available to homeless individuals suffering from mental illnesses? All of these questions I would like to address at the Town Hall Meeting, not only to educate fellow students, but also to hear the different perspectives they have on the topic.

Sarah Stankewitz

There are many health issues facing the homeless today; from nutrition, to financing, to substance abuse. I will be focusing on their mental health, with emphasis on issues they face and help they could receive. Medicating the homeless is never an easy task, due to a hard to maintain schedule, a necessity when using medication (Lopez, 2005). Many have also already been exposed to the mental health system, and may not like what they have been witness to, making it that much harder to help them. There are also many alternative forms of therapy, including complementary (used along side traditional medicine) or creative arts therapies (Jaffe, 2007). Creative arts is a very interesting options, because it may help to unlock right-brained ideas, not usually accessible through speech therapy. I think that this idea should be addressed at the Town Hall Meeting, especially since music was such an escape for Nathaniel in *The Soloist*. The discussion is hopefully going to be insightful. Although we have been over much of this content in discussions in class, having new people and their ideas introduced may bring out new outlooks. I also think that this discussion will get intense, because there are two very distinct views. Hopefully we can keep it civil.

Travis Trandem

Mental illness is at the root of many problems, including chronically homeless people. Many questions arise from mental illness, its treatment, and its effect on the country. Questions such as: Why are so many people with mental illness homeless? Is the current treatment of mental illness the best it can be? How effective could any treatment be of mental illness? What can be done to improve this situation? Can using ones imagination through the arts combat a person's mental illness? These are but a few of the questions about mental illness which demand answers.

Much information has already been found concerning the answers to the above questions. Statistics compiled by the national coalition for the homeless indicates that over 20% of the homeless population suffers from a mental illness. The reason for this is the lack of community-based outpatient mental health services particularly for the worse cases of mental illness (healing). The dissolution of many mental hospitals forty years ago combined with the past statement is why the current system of treating the mentally ill is so overwhelmed (healing). While some cases can't be treated successfully, many situations can be improved by a simple donation or volunteer work. Also, simply being a friend to a mentally ill person can increase their lives by adding support and increasing determination (Lopez). Expressing oneself through words can be difficult for

people without mental illness, but in both cases using one's imagination through an art can help in doing so (Blackburn; Wilinski).

Cortney Hammerland

The older generations in our country that have any type of mental illness can remember a time when those who were said to be insane were checked in to asylums all over the United States. In these asylums the care wasn't always the best because of the number of residents that were rapidly increasing throughout the early 1900s up until the 1970s. Many patients went through horrific treatment procedures involuntarily. These treatments were supposed to cure their illnesses. Many of these treatments impaired the patients' motor skills meaning they then had trouble remembering how to work their bodies. Patients had to be retrained to be able to walk correctly without risk of falling, how to bath, dress themselves, as well as, to feed themselves and be able to take care of everyday tasks, after the treatment(s) the patients would resort back to being a baby. As the years went by, the asylums became more popular and shortage of staff made it hard to spend enough time with patients necessary to make the patients secure and able enough to face the outside world again.

These treatments that were so inhumane were, the lobotomies, created by European Antonio Egaz Moniz 1935, and Walter Freeman who later improved the procedure (Park view). Antonio's procedure involved drilling two holes on either side of the forehead and inserting a surgical knife to sever the prefrontal cortex from the rest of the brain (Park View). Walter's procedure was cheaper and faster, it involved lifting the eyelid and inserting an ordinary ice pick above each eye of a patient with only a local anesthetic, drive it through the thin bone with a light tap of a mallet, swish the pick back and forth like a windshield wiper and, with that, a difficult patient became docile (Park View).

Other treatments including being wrapped in a bed sheet and submerged in ice water until they passed out, electric shocks to the brain, bleeding sessions, where the bad blood was drained in large quantities (Leupo). With all of these frightening practices, it's no wonder why the mentally ill are not keen on the idea of seeking help for themselves. These treatments did not help the majority of the patients. The fact that there are some cases of these procedures working well on individuals proves that the procedures weren't a complete waste. In the 1950s anti-psychotic drugs were becoming available and with that inhumane procedures were obsolete.

Nakai Roy

For the past several months, my freshman seminar class and I have been discussing many aspects of homelessness. On the subject of causes of homelessness, I am interested more specifically in mental illness as a cause of homelessness. I chose this subject because I feel that mental illness is a huge problem for homeless people in America, and very little is being done to address the issue because too little is known about it. Through my research on the subject, I have discovered many new perspectives and ideas.

Something that never would have crossed my mind before is the fact that many mental institutions in the 60's and 70's discharged large numbers of patients without making arrangements for their care afterwards. Consequently, many of these people wound up living on the streets. Another thing I learned is that although awareness about mental illness in the homeless population is growing, actual statistics are fairly hard to come by because of the unwillingness of many patients to talk to anyone. These are both topics that I would like to discuss during this year's Town Hall Meeting, along with possible solutions to treating mentally-ill homeless patients. I am interested to hear what professionals in this field have to say on the subject.

I would like to further research the treatment and rehabilitation opportunities available to homeless people affected by mental illness. I think that there are many options that still need more development and revision. This is an issue that will not be resolved overnight, and will probably always be a subject of disagreement to some.

Natalie Roth

Mental illness is a common problem around the world. Homelessness is also a problem in society. Both are not easy to eliminate. Health facilities have tried to help cure people with illness and also take care of the ill homeless. It is not easy to live a normal life with an illness, many need counseling or caretakers. Since everyone cannot take care of the mentally ill, they become homeless. Those who are mentally ill could have a serious illness such as: schizophrenia, depression, addiction, etcetera, which cause homelessness.

Schizophrenia is a serious illness. Those with schizophrenia can hear voices telling them to leave and go somewhere new. They can also see hallucinations causing them to think differently. With the voices, people tend to leave their homes and their lifestyle. Their job (if any) gets forgotten and life on the streets is where they would end up.

Depression causes loneliness. It is often hard to reach those whom suffer from depression. A different lifestyle can change everything.

Mood swings occur, causing life to not feel so important, which can lead to homelessness.

Drug and alcohol addiction is also a problem in society. Those whom are addicts, waste their money on drugs or alcohol and are left poor.

They cannot afford a house leading them to rely on others to give them money on the street.

I believe mental illness can definitely be a major cause of homelessness in the world today. It is so hard to cure the mentally ill, so more and more become homeless. More health facilities or shelters are in high demand and may help some, but others born with an illness may continue to suffer. I chose to discuss mental illness as a cause of homelessness, because a vast majority of homeless people are suffering from a mental illness and need help.

Amy Young

When I think of homeless people my mind automatically thinks of someone with a mental illness. This is a common misconception I realize, however; many of the chronically homeless do have some sort of mental illness. I believe that mental illness is a cause of chronic homelessness.

There are many different types of mental illnesses that plague homeless people. A common illness is schizophrenia. There is no real explanation as to why people get schizophrenia. A frequent assumption is that it is inherited, but that is not true for all people. Schizophrenia makes people nervous, paranoid, untrusting, and confused. They also can have a short attention span, and have mood swings, along with many other symptoms.

It is no wonder why people suffering from something such as schizophrenia can easily become homeless. There are so many responsibilities that a "functioning member of society" has to deal with on a daily basis that even they cannot do it all. Someone with a mind that has turned on them would have a very difficult time keeping up with the fast paced world that we live in. The symptoms listed above are all difficult to imagine happening to oneself, however trying to deal with such problems and keeping your life on track would be almost impossible without serious help.

It seems as though it is a downward spiral for homeless people. It starts with something such as losing a job or something changing, and progresses from there. Once on that path without help from others it seems as though it would be difficult to recover from, especially for someone with a mental illness that does not trust anyone. I

am not saying that all homeless people have a mental illness, I do however, feel that that many of the chronically homeless are struggling with some sort of problem within themselves.

Gregory Swain

I would like to discuss the question: Are the side effects associated with clozapine and olanzapine worth the benefits of their use and can we avoid using these medications all together by focusing on the individual?

Through my research, I have learned that medicating schizophrenics with clozapine and olanzapine alone can cause schizophrenics to become ill from side effects. Weight gain and diabetes have been known to occur as a result of these medications causing some patients refusal to use the drugs. I have also explored the idea of paranoia interfering with therapy for the mentally ill.

It is important to comprehend the paranoia associated with schizophrenia in order to understand why schizophrenic people are so difficult to medicate. In The Soloist, Nathaniel shows signs of paranoia that are deeply rooted and his disease requires special care. Lopez and the staff at Lamp develop a trusting relationship with the man and his condition improves. While this is just one example of individualized care, it does provide an examination of the treatment of a mentally deficient person with extreme paranoia.

I would like to have a conversation about Nathaniel in The Soloist and how the best way to medicate schizophrenic people is to use an approach similar to the one used at the Lamp Community. Medication is beneficial to some, so it may be taken in addition to treatment but the true recovery will occur with an extensive treatment plan involving a close relationship between the doctor and the patient.

A question for further consideration is: Do we treat mentally ill homeless people in a different way than people who aren't homeless because they require more care and resources?

Cameron Kennedy

The group that I am going to be working with during the Town Hall Meeting is going to be discussing the effects of mental illness in homelessness. More specifically I want to discuss the different ways that we as citizens can help people that are in the situation. I think this is a very important issue with homelessness because someone with a mental illness has an even smaller chance of getting their life together and becoming a productive member of society. Most of the mentally ill homeless population has no family members to worry about their well being, and more often than not when they do have families they are not aware of the symptoms of diseases such as schizophrenia or depression. "The mentally ill homeless population encounters more barriers to employment, tend to be in poorer physical health, and have more contact with the legal system than homeless people who do not suffer from mental disorder". (NCH Fact Sheet #5) I would like to explore reasons why the mentally ill homeless population has such a difficult time recovering from the streets. Furthermore I would like to discuss why treatment wasn't given to these individuals when the disease first reared its' ugly head. The mentally ill, whether or not they are homeless, require constant access to treatment in order to remain as healthy as possible. Before the Town Hall Meeting I would like to research which mental illnesses are the most prevalent among the homeless population, and I want to look into specific cases to try and understand how someone in that condition can end up on the streets.