

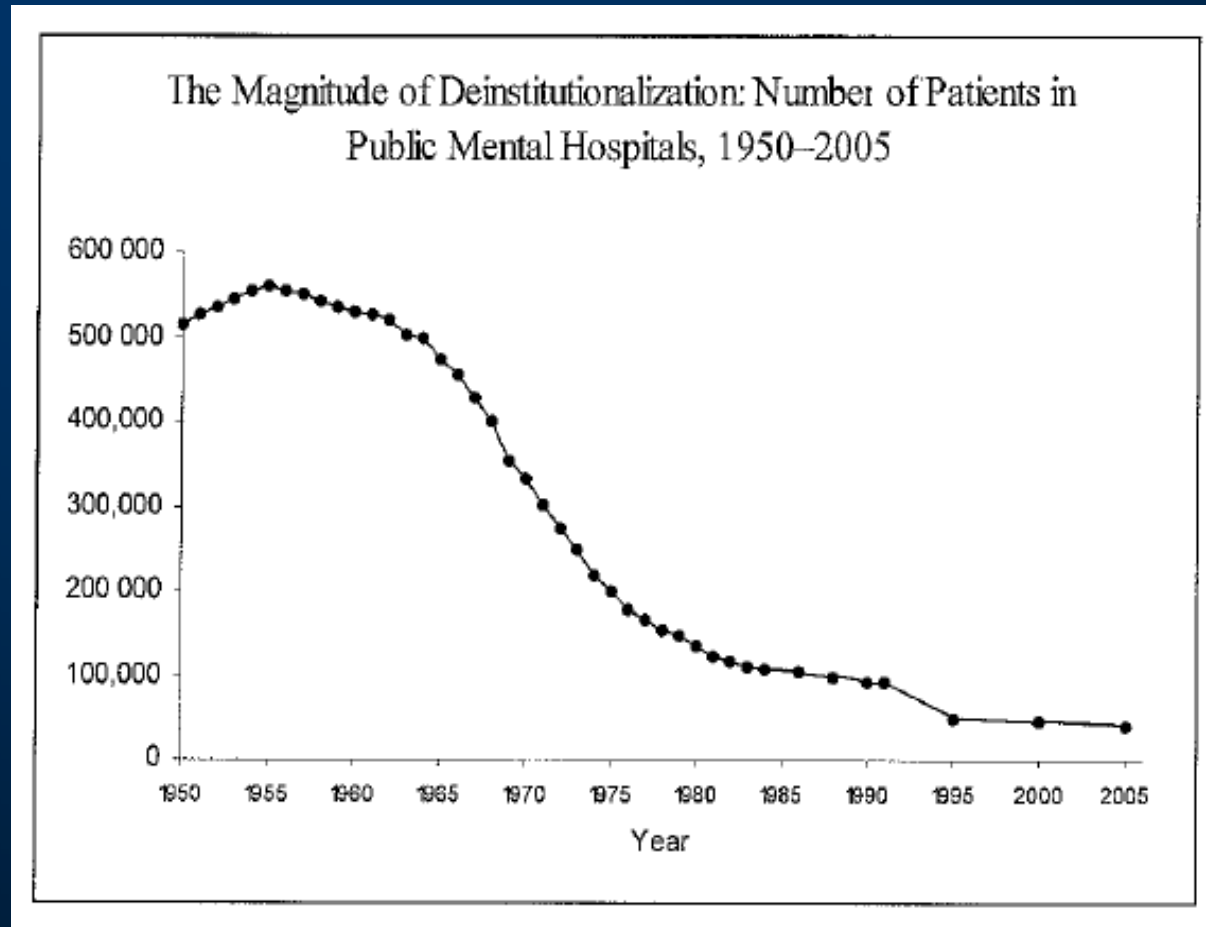
# The Insanity Offense: How America's Failure to Treat the Seriously Mentally Ill Endangers Its Citizens

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# Outline

- Set the scene
- Discuss the consequences of deinstitutionalization
- Focus on violence and homicides
- Discuss remedies
- The role of federal programs

# The Magnitude of Deinstitutionalization: Number of Patients in Public Mental Hospitals, 1950–2005



## Civil liberties lawyers:

“The goal should be nothing less than the abolition of involuntary hospitalization.”

Bruce Ennis

*Prisoners of Psychiatry, 1972*

# Severe psychiatric disorders =

- Schizophrenia
- Schizoaffective disorders
- Bipolar disorder with psychosis
- Major depression with psychosis

4,000,000 individuals with  
SMRI in the U.S.

2,000,000 not being treated

1,000,000 would have been  
hospitalized 50 years ago

400,000 the most problematic

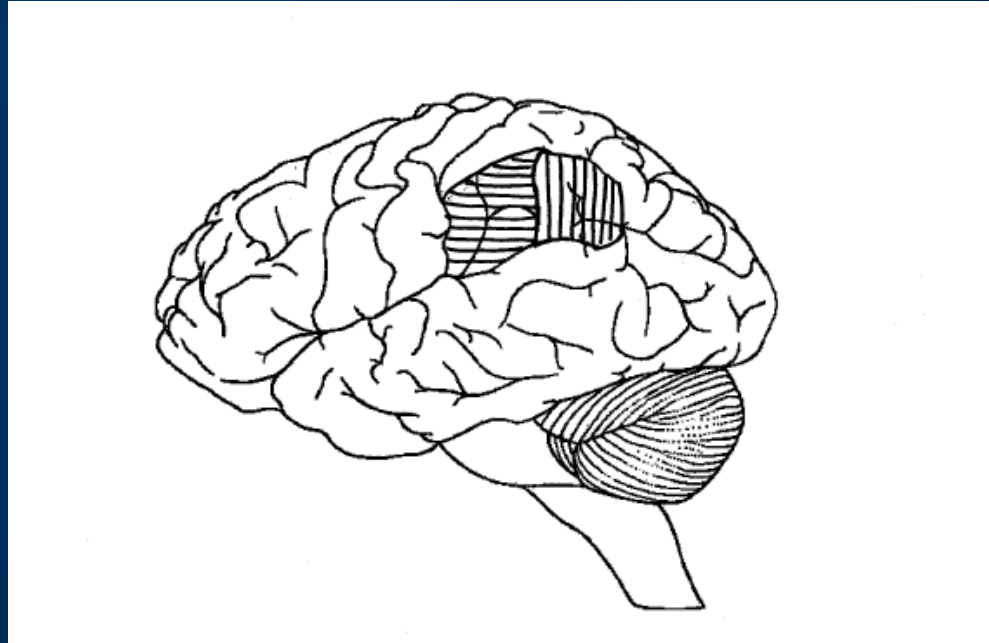
40,000 overtly dangerous

# Why do people with severe psychiatric disorders not take medication?

The biggest single reason, confirmed in several studies, is that they do not think they are sick. They have limited or no awareness of their illness.

In neurological terms, this is called *anosognosia*.

# Inferior Parietal Lobe



The supramarginal gyrus (BA40)  
has vertical lines.

The angular gyrus (BA39) has horizontal lines.

# Suicide and Self-Mutilation

Among the approximately 29,000 suicides each year in the U.S., at least 5,000 individuals are psychotic at the time they commit suicide.

## Suicide and self-mutilation, cont'd

A study of suicide among individuals with schizophrenia reported that “there were 7 times as many patients who did not comply with treatment in the suicide group as there were in the control group.”

De Hert M et al. Risk factors for suicide in young people suffering from schizophrenia. *Schizophrenia Research* 2001;47:127-134.

# Victimization

Individuals with severe psychiatric disorders are vulnerable to exploitation and victimization.

This is especially true if they are not taking medication and thus are more psychotic.

## Victimization, cont'd

- Los Angeles: One-third of individuals in board-and-care homes "reported being robbed and/or assaulted during the preceding year."
- Washington DC: One-third of women reported "at least one sexual assault while homeless."
- North Carolina: Eight percent had been the victim of a violent crime (assault, rape, or mugging) in the 4 months preceding their psychiatric admission.

# Homelessness

- A 2005 survey of the U.S. estimated that there were 744,000 homeless people; 439,000 of them were single individuals, and the rest were part of families.
- Multiple studies have reported that at least one-third of single homeless people have severe psychiatric disorders. Thus, there are between 150,000 and 200,000 homeless individuals with severe psychiatric disorders. This is equivalent to the population of Des Moines, Providence, or Salt Lake City.

# Incarceration

- In 2007, there were 2.3 million individuals in jails and prison in the U.S.
- At least 10%, or 230,000 were SMI.
- In every one of the 50 states, the state prisons now hold more SMI than the state mental hospitals.
- In every one of the 3,137 counties, the county jail now holds more SMI than the psych ward of the county hospital.

The “freedom” to be penniless, helpless, ill, and finally arrested, jailed and criminally committed is not freedom at all—it is abandonment. . . . The “liberty” to be naked in a padded cell, hallucinating, delusional, and tormented, is not liberty—it is a *folie à deux* between pseudo-sophisticated liberals and an unrealizing public.

Darold Treffert, 1982

# Violence and Homicides

- Eight major U.S. studies of violent acts by SMI
- 5–10% of SMI will commit serious acts of violence each year.

**Example:**

## **The MacArthur Violence Study**

- 951 followed for one year after hospital discharge
- 262 of them committed 608 acts of serious violence, including 6 homicides

# Three U.S. studies of homicides by SMI

- 1970–75 in Albany County, NY  
8/28 (29%) of homicides had schizophrenia

Grunberg et al, *Am J Psychiatry* 1977;134:685–687, and *J Nerv Ment Dis* 1978;166:868–874

## Three U.S. studies of homicides by SMI

- 1978–80 in Contra Costa County, CA  
7/71 (10%) of homicides had  
schizophrenia

*Wilcox, Am J Forensic  
Psychiatry 1985;6:3–15*

## Three U.S. studies of homicides by SMI

- 1990–2002, sample of all individuals in Indiana convicted of homicide

53/518 (10.2%) of homicides had schizophrenia, BP, or other psychosis

Matejkowski et al, *J Am Acad Psychiatry Law*\_2008;36:74–86

## Conclusion: About 10% of homicides in the U.S. are committed by SMI

- 2006: 17,034 homicides, so SMI responsible for approx 1,700
- 1987–2006: 388,311 homicides, so SMI responsible for approx 38,000

Individuals with untreated severe psychiatric disorders are disproportionately responsible for certain kinds of homicides:

- Family members, esp mothers
- Small children killed by parents
- Rampage murders
- Mental health professionals
- Clergy
- Public figures

# Solutions are needed to:

- Protect SMI individuals
- Protect the public
- Decrease stigma
- Stop the problem from getting worse
- Make better use of public funds

# Costs

- Mental illness–associated costs of Medicaid, Medicare, SSI, and SSDI are among the fastest growing costs in the federal budget.

## Costs

- NIMH studies: SMI are 13% of all mental disorders yet utilize 40% (1993 study) or 58% (2000 study) of all treatment costs.
- English study of schizophrenia: the sickest 10% of patients utilize 80% of costs.

# 1. Identify the target population

- History of past violence
- Substance abuser
- Noncompliance with medication/anosognosia

## 2. Modify the laws

- Laws permitting outpatient commitment
- Laws linking federal funds to treatment compliance

# Effectiveness of Assisted Outpatient Treatment

## 1. Decrease in days hospitalized per year

	Prior to being on AOT	On AOT	Decrease
District of Columbia	55	38	-31%
North Carolina	22	14	-36%
Ohio	133	44	-67%
Iowa	33	5	-85%
New York	100	44	-66%
North Carolina	33	5	-85%

## Effectiveness of Assisted Outpatient Treatment, cont'd

2. Decrease in homelessness:  
19% to 5% (NY)
3. Decrease in victimization:  
42% to 24% (NC)
4. Decrease in arrests:  
45% to 12% (NC)  
30% to 5% (NY)
5. Decrease in violent behavior:  
42% to 27% (NC)  
15% to 8% (NY)

# Treatment Advocacy Center

*[www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org](http://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org)*

# Laws to Link Federal Funds to Treatment Compliance

- Medicaid, Medicare, SSI, SSDI, VA disability
- Russell Watson received 14 years of SSI (approx \$100,000) before storming the Capitol in 1998.

# Federal Role

- Social Security Administration: Medicaid, Medicare, SSI, SSDI
- Veterans Administration
- National Institute of Mental Health (\$1.3 billion)
- Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) (\$884 million)
- Protection and Advocacy Program (P&A) (\$34 million)

The paramount  
civil right of the  
patient should be  
that of adequate  
treatment.

Stephen Rachlin, 1974