

**Federal Government must take leadership
to reduce burden of mental illness
More than 2.6 million Canadians affected by mental illness
Almost half do not receive necessary services**

Ottawa. September 3, 2003 – Canada urgently needs a national action plan on mental illness that will set national service standards and target resources to those who need them, said the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) following today’s release of a Statistics Canada study. The comprehensive survey identified 2.6 million of the six million Canadians who suffer from mental illness.

“The Statistics Canada study confirms that almost half of Canadians suffering from mental illness do not receive necessary services and care,” said CAMIMH’s chairman, Phil Upshall. “Imagine if fifty percent of those with cancer, heart disease or diabetes did not receive the basic care they need. It would be a national crisis.”

Of the 2.6 million Canadians identified as suffering from the effects of mental illness, 1.1 million face insurmountable challenges accessing appropriate care¹. The study also found that a large majority of those who sought help were satisfied with the care they received.

A national action plan on mental illness and mental health should:

- Build on today’s benchmark study by establishing a national data collection and reporting system
- Implement a national research strategy
- Establish national standards for services
- Provide and target necessary resources

“Governments across Canada champion investments in health care, using the issue to win elections and demonstrate their social conscience. But to date they have failed to produce any national, coordinated strategy on mental illness. Mental health issues need to get onto the radar screen.”

¹ The study does not take into account major illnesses and disorders such as schizophrenia, nor does it examine incidence of mental illness among children and youth under 15.



Established in 1998, CAMIMH is an alliance of mental health organizations comprised of health care providers, as well as the mentally ill and their families. CAMIMH's mandate is to ensure that mental illness prevention and mental health promotion are placed on the national agenda so that the mentally ill and their families receive appropriate access to care and support.

The current member organizations of CAMIMH are:

- Autism Society of Canada
- Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention
- Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health
- Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses
- Canadian Psychiatric Association
- The Canadian Psychological Association
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- The Mood Disorders Society of Canada
- National Network for Mental Health
- The Native Health Association of Canada
- Schizophrenia Society of Canada

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