

Dr. Jones estimated that 50% of the homeless and 10% of the population in jails have severe mental illness. He further indicates that perhaps 25% of the patients in his program fluctuate between living in the community and living in hospitals during episodes of acute illness. He further claims that many patient relapses can be attributed to the very poor environment into which patients are placed in the community.

The Canadian Psychiatric Association (CPA) is similarly concerned with problems of access to psychiatric health care services and the need to link health and social services, especially housing. The CPA commented that:

. . . psychiatric clinicians report encountering a degree of inflexibility and lack of creativity within the health care system that effectively prevents less expensive alternatives to institutional care from being offered . . . ¹¹⁵

Dr. Molloy ¹¹⁶ and the CPA expressed concern about the relatively large percentage of the elderly population in the over eighty group suffering from chronic psychiatric illness. It is members of this group, according to the CPA, that often have the poorest social supports and requires institutionalization for safety and adequacy of care; there seems to be no reason to believe that they will necessarily be healthier in the future. Therefore, the CPA takes the view that:

. . . planning for the future of health care services, for both the elderly and the chronically psychiatrically ill, based on an optimistic projection of increased healthiness would be dangerous because it may grossly underfund a system which is at present already considered to be underfunded (. . .) planning for the future with the same kind of morbidity levels that we see today would be much more appropriate. ¹¹⁷

Several witnesses, including the CPA, also emphasized the important role of health promotion and disease prevention in the area of mental health. Abuse of alcohol and other substances was identified as a major factor in the development and aggravation of psychiatric disorders and the recommendation was made that greater efforts be made to educate the population about the risks of such abuse, particularly with respect to cognitive deterioration, family violence, sexual abuse and foetal alcohol syndrome.

Many witnesses feel that all health care consumers must actively participate in making decisions about their own health, as well as in planning health care services. It follows that consumers must receive appropriate and timely information in order to make decisions related to health. The CMHA says that the person with mental illness is not willing to be "a passive recipient of medical services" but wishes to "take a central role in

¹¹⁵ Brief, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, Issue No. 53.

¹¹⁷ Brief, p. 5.