

Health Promotion in the International Clubhouse Community: Needs, Barriers, and Activities

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There is compelling evidence that individuals with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) are at significantly greater risk of co-morbid health problems and premature death when compared to the general population (Bartsch, Shern, Feinberg, Fuller, & Willet, 1990; Berren et al., 1994; Murphy et al., 1989; DMH, 2001; and Prior, Hassall & Cross, 1996). There is need for integrated interventions in community based psychiatric rehabilitation services for individuals with Serious Mental Illness (SMI). These interventions include efforts to insure adequate primary medical care, effective health screening, risk assessment, and therapeutic goal setting that attends to physical exercise, nutrition, smoking cessation, and other health promotion practices.

Clubhouses are psychiatric rehabilitation programs where people with psychiatric disabilities come to rebuild their lives. Participants (members) do not live in the clubhouse. Membership is for life so members have all the time they need to secure life in the community. The clubhouse model includes opportunities for relationships based on friendship and mutual support. Meaningful work within the rehabilitative environment of the *Work-ordered Day* (day-to-day operation of the clubhouse) and employment (Transitional, Supported, and Independent Employment) at prevailing wages in the wider community is a primary clubhouse focus. Clubhouses offer a variety of supports and services including vocational supports, employment, education, housing, outreach, advocacy, wellness activities, and assistance with accessing health care, substance use services, and social supports (McKay, Yates, & Johnsen, 2005).

Many clubhouse participants (members) are overweight, have poor nutrition, and lack exercise. One local clubhouse reported that several members have died from complications related to stroke, heart disease, and diabetes. Concern has grown among clubhouse staff and members about developing awareness of health promotion practices as well as interventions to support health behaviors and reduce risk among clubhouse staff and members. Recently, a few clubhouse programs reported findings related to wellness activities, however, the extent of current health promotion activities and practices within clubhouses is unclear.

The Program for Clubhouse Research at the Center for Mental Health Services Research at the University of Massachusetts Medical School conducted a comprehensive survey to obtain information concerning the ways clubhouses are promoting practices that improve the physical health of members. Research questions examined include: 1) What is the perception of the need for health promotion activities and practices for clubhouse members; 2) What health promotion activities and practices are currently offered in clubhouse programs; 3) Are there any barriers to health promotion activities for clubhouses and/or their members; and 4) Do clubhouse programs plan to initiate any health promotion activities in the next 12 months?

Preliminary results will be presented from 219 clubhouses including perceived barriers, the extent of need for a

variety of health promotion activities including weight loss programs, nutritional education, smoking cessation, medication education, etc. Excerpts of current routine health screening and risk assessments for clubhouse members, a sample of current health promotion activities offered by clubhouses, and planned health promotion activities within the next 12 months will also be presented. The results of this study are expected to provide valuable knowledge about the perception of the need for health promotion activities for clubhouse members, current and planned program activities within clubhouses internationally, and barriers to change and program development. Implications for potential collaborations and on-going health promotion activities will be discussed.