

Inability to Work Due to a Mental or Physical Disability: How Prevalent Is It Among Adults Seen in Psychiatry?

Analysis of the 1999 American Psychiatric Institute (APIRE) Practice Research Network (PRN) national Study of Psychiatric Patients and Treatments' psychiatrist-reported data indicates that among 1596 adults age 18 or older who were treated by psychiatrists, 33% (n=530) were not working due to a mental or physical disability (unable to work). The remaining patients (n=1066) included: 32.5% working full-time, 12% working part-time, 8% homemakers, 3% students, 7% retired and 5% unemployed for other reasons.

The highest rates of "inability to work" due to a mental or physical disability were observed among patients with at least one of the following diagnoses (Figure 1): Schizophrenia (67%), Substance Use Disorders (SUD) 43%, Bipolar Disorder (40%), or Personality Disorder (34%), followed by anxiety (26%) and depressive disorders (24%).

Significantly higher rates of inability to work were observed among patients with co-occurring SUD (45%) than those without (30%) (Figure 2); overall, 21% of patients (n=302) had a co-occurring SUD. Rates of disability were significantly higher among those with co-occurring general medical conditions (GMC) 42%, than those without a medical comorbidity (27%; p<0.001); approximately 44% of patients (n=701) had one or more co-occurring GMC. Significantly higher rates of "inability to work" were observed among those with one or more Axis IV psychosocial problems (35%) than those without such problems (21%; p<0.001); four out of five patients had one or more Axis IV psychosocial problems.

According to the results of 1995-1996 National Center for Health Statistics National Health Interview Survey, approximately 57% of individuals 18-69 with mental or emotional problems (M/E), 44% of persons with substance abuse disorders (S/A), and in comparison, 29% of the general household population were considered unemployed or not in the labor force (Willis et al. in Mental Health U.S. 1998). Moreover, 35% of persons with M/E, 29% of persons with S/A and 19% in the general population were reportedly unable to work because of mental health problems (Willis et al. in Mental Health U.S. 1998). Patients' fulfillment of age appropriate roles (including employment, school, family, etc.) are important factors contributing to overall quality of life and have been shown to be associated with better outcomes of care (Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General 1999). Vocational rehabilitation or employment services as a part of patient's treatment plan warrants considerable attention. Patterns of treatment and services will be reported in the future PRN datagrams.

Figure 1. Rates of inability to work among patients with psychiatric disorders

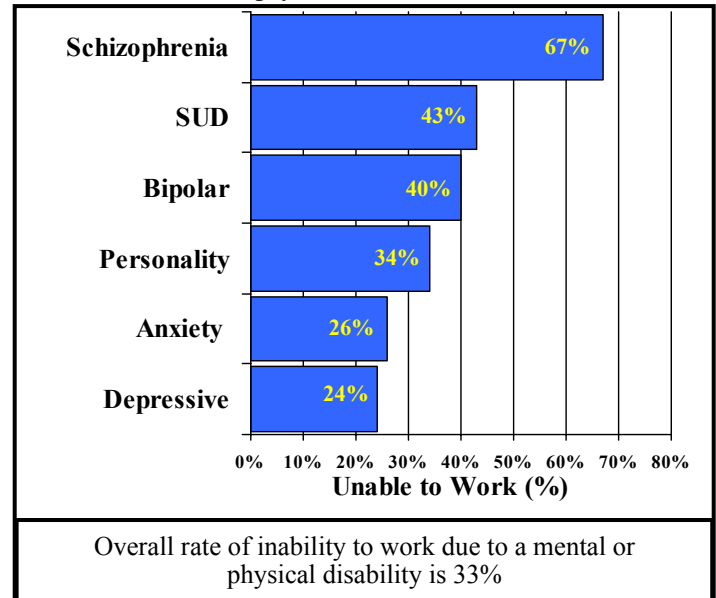
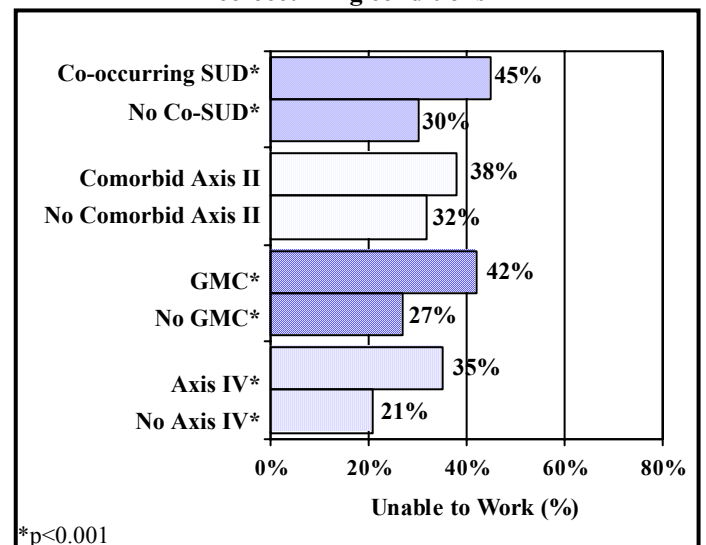


Figure 2. Rates of inability to work by co-occurring conditions



Data Source: The 1999 American Psychiatric Practice Research Network (PRN) Study of Psychiatric Patients and Treatments (SPPT). Results are preliminary and not for citation. In 1999, 615 of 784 (78%) PRN members completed the SPPT.

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Questions? Comments? Or for more information contact: The Practice Research Network Staff, The American Psychiatric Institute for Research and Education, 1400 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005, Phone: 1-800-713-7123 Fax: 202-789-1124 E-mail: apapr@psych.org