

January/February 2011



Research Looks at Impact of Parity on Substance Abuse Treatment

Parity in insurance coverage of substance abuse treatment did not lead to increased use of substance abuse treatment and did not increase insurance plans' costs of providing such treatment... **READ MORE** [http://www.psych.org/MainMenu/Newsroom/NewsReleases/2011-News-Releases_1/Impact-of-Parity-on-Substance-Abuse-Treatment.aspx?FT=.pdf]

Few Aware of Law Broadening Access to Treatment

An overwhelming majority of Americans remain unaware of a law mandating equal coverage of mental health benefits by insurance companies, a cause for concern by psychologists at a time when... **READ MORE** [<http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2011/01/law-mental-health.aspx>]

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Tucson Tragedy Puts Untreated Mental Illness in Spotlight

In the wake of the horrific shooting rampage in Arizona last month, shaken Americans are asking the usual questions: How did this happen, and what can be done to prevent it from happening again?

The mass media is pointing blame at:

- lax gun control laws,
- an increase in inflammatory political rhetoric, and/or
- a dysfunctional mental healthcare system.

Ironically, the shooting has done little to dampen the enthusiasm for pro-gun legislation. In fact, it is fueling calls for easier access to guns for self-protection should events similar to those of January 8 happen again. The problem there is that "similar events" often render us helpless. If you recall, Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D-Ariz.) was shot point-blank in the back of the head, so it's unlikely she could have defended herself with her own gun. Let's face it—those with firearms couldn't even prevent the incident from occurring.

On the political front, politicians are now touting a toning down of the rhetoric—at least until the 2012 campaign season kicks off. However, it is a bit of a stretch to prove that kinder and gentler political rhetoric will have any impact on the number of future events.

That brings us to the third possible influential factor: the mental healthcare system. By most accounts there were numerous warning signs as to the deterioration of Jared Loughner's mental state prior to his apparent assassination attempt on Giffords, yet he never received treatment for his illness. Sadly, Loughner's situation is not unique. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), as many as 25 percent of Americans suffer some type of mental illness in their lifetime and 60 percent of these people get no care at all.

Unfortunately, the mental healthcare safety net across the country continues to struggle in the face of state budget deficits. Funding for mental health services was slashed by more than \$2 billion over the past two years. Without treatment, the economic cost of mental illness is a staggering \$100-plus billion each year in the United States alone. This includes disability, unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness, emergency room medical care, incarceration, suicide, etc., not to mention the individuals whose lives are impacted by senseless violence.

Unless we invest in fixing our mental healthcare system, it seems likely that the costs to society will continue to increase and we will continue to ask these same questions again and again.

Mental Health First Aid

Mental health first aid is a groundbreaking education program that helps the public identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. The program started a decade ago in Australia and was brought to the United States by the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, in partnership with Maryland and Missouri state governments.

In the well known events of Columbine High School, Virginia Tech and now Tucson, dozens of people, including teachers and classmates, police, healthcare workers,

friends and family, saw warning signs. Without any formal training, most people struggle with how to distinguish ominous behavior from the merely odd, the red flags from the red herrings. The National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare is offering a certification course that trains average citizens on how to properly respond to a person in crisis or who is developing signs of serious mental illness.

Find out more about mental health first aid courses at: www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org.

Did You Know?

World Intervention Day was observed on December 30, 2010. The day was dedicated to raising awareness of the physical, financial and emotional costs of behavioral health crisis, and to rally support for those



seeking to help loved ones get assessed, get stabilized, get treatment and ultimately get well. All too often, however, the support system surrounding a chemically dependent or mentally ill loved one stands still in silence, enabling crisis and chaos. World Intervention

Day—and every day—is our chance to conquer the myths of change surrounding mental illness and addiction.

Consider this:

- 1 in 20 Americans say they have problems with extreme drinking
- 1 in 38 Americans have an eating disorder
- 1 in 15 Americans regularly use an illicit substance
- 1 in 20 Americans are currently dealing with depression

Source: *Change Institute* [www.changeinstitute.com]

Meet Your ATP Insurance Program Team

The Addiction Treatment Providers insurance program supports the millions of Americans suffering with mental health and substance use disorders by providing a comprehensive and cost-effective insurance program for treatment providers. The dedicated and caring providers of behavioral healthcare can focus on the challenges of their mission knowing that they have the best available insurance products and services protecting them. Your ATP Team is here to help facilitate that protection. Please contact us today!

Pictured L to R: Meg Jenkins (Underwriting Assistant x143), Jennifer Johnston (Senior Program Underwriter x 109), Richard Willetts (Program Director x225), Tiffany Ferrara (Program Underwriter x160), Nancy Tedesco (Program Underwriter x 122), Corrine Smith (Underwriting Assistant x236)

