

Canadian men reluctant to consult mental health services

May 22 2009

Between 20 and 70 percent of Canadians affected by mental illness shun medical treatment. Such avoidance of services provided by doctors and psychologists is particularly acute among men, according to a recent study published in the *Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*.

In Canada, less than 10 percent of the population utilizes mental health services for problems ranging from depression to schizophrenia. But this number isn't representative of the real number of people suffering from mental illness, according study author Aline Drapeau, a researcher at the Université de Montréal's Department of Psychiatry and Centre de recherche Fernand-Seguin of the Louis-H. Lafontaine Hospital.

According to data from the Statistics Canada Canadian Community Health Survey, women are 1.5 times more likely than men to turn to psychiatric services, twice as likely to consult a psychologist and 2.5 times more likely to turn to a general practitioner.

While these numbers might suggest that more women suffer from [mental illness](#), Drapeau disagrees. "In comparable circumstances, women consult more often than men," she says. The discrepancy, says Drapeau, shows how men and women do not perceive symptoms in the same way as programmed in their social anchorages.

"Social anchorages is an enculturation mechanism by which a person learns his or her social roles," says Drapeau. "Men and women don't always have the same cultural reference points because socially

acceptable attitudes and behaviors can vary for both sexes."

For instance, parental obligations aren't perceived equally in the workplace. For women, it is perceived as positive to attend to maternal duties. For men, forgoing work to take care of the kids is perceived more negatively.

The same parallels exist in mental health. "If mental disease is seen in a negative light in the workplace, a man will be more reluctant than a woman to use the services available to treat their disease," says Drapeau.

Other factors, such as tight finances or even type of employment, can influence whether men use [mental health](#) services. But the root of the problem, Drapeau stresses, is that men have greater difficulty acknowledging and accepting their symptoms.

Source: University of Montreal ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Canadian men reluctant to consult mental health services (2009, May 22) retrieved 19 April 2024 from

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