

The hidden cost of schizophrenia

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People being treated for schizophrenia are more likely than the general population to have encounters with the criminal justice system in the US. A study published in the open access journal *BMC Psychiatry* has shown that schizophrenia patients' involvement with the criminal justice system is primarily driven by their being victims of crime and that the average annual per-patient cost of involvement with the criminal justice system was \$1429.

Haya Ascher-Svanum led a team of researchers from Eli Lilly and Company, USA, who used data from a study of around 600 people with [schizophrenia](#) to estimate the prevalence and cost of involvement with the criminal justice system.

They found that 46% had had at least one encounter, and these patients were more likely to be younger, with poorer mental health, and less likely to adhere to their medication regime. Being a crime victim was the most prevalent type of encounter, comprising 67% of these patients.

The team also estimated, for the first time, the direct economic impact of legal involvement. According to Ascher-Svanum, "These encounters may comprise approximately 6% to 11% of the annual per-patient direct total costs. When assessing the costs of schizophrenia, future studies should account for potential [criminal justice system](#) involvement whenever possible".

More information: Involvement in the US criminal justice system and cost implications for persons treated for schizophrenia, Haya Ascher-

Svanum, Allen W. Nyhuis, Douglas E. Faries, Daniel E. Ball and Bruce J. Kinon, *BMC Psychiatry* (in press),
www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpsychiatry/

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