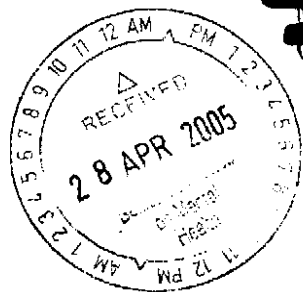


Committee Secretary
Senate Select Committee on Mental Health
Department of Senate
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

[REDACTED]



April 26, 2005

Dear Committee members,

My wife has schizophrenia. Her mother and brother also have mental illnesses (schizophrenia) and they are in much worst situation. This letter will focus on the illness history and services received by my wife and my family.

I met my wife in 1989 when she came on holiday in Macedonia. During that time I asked her about her and her family's health and she always said that they were all okay. But after we got married I started to notice something strange especially when she received telephone calls from her mother. When 5 months later we arrived in Australia, everything came much clearer. Her mother had been visibly sick, her younger brother had been in a mental hospital, her father had been mostly drunk and only the youngest brother had been stable but none of them has had a job despite her parents being in Australia for 40 years. She told me about constant yelling, screaming and arguments for money.

Later on we visited her GP and his first question was if she told me about her taking tablets (later I find out that she'd been taking anti-depressants from the age of 12). Shortly after our son had been born and she started showing signs of illness but her GP didn't find anything wrong and kept her without any treatment. Problems started about 15 months after the birth of our son and from then I have been receiving promises from many specialists for her improvement without any results. My wife is unwell and cant make proper decisions and judgment about maintaining herself or maintaining our home but constantly arguing if someone gives some suggestions, because she thinks she doing good job. I and my mother do almost all domestic duties and look after her and the family. I have found that doctors ignore me as a person in their decisions about her treatment and rely much on what she my has to say about her state of health and her look of day of the visit.

I cannot understand this model, because she is obviously unwell, is continuously medicated and almost always making the wrong decisions, so why do the doctors place so much weight on what she says. I am with her constantly and I know exactly when her condition deteriorates and when and how her symptoms change. Despite this the doctors almost never want to hear what I have to say and even if they listen later they ignore me. I am told that they are the "experts" but they spend very short time every 4-6 weeks talking to her to make a proper diagnosis, and this not only doesn't solve the problems for her but creating more problems for me and the rest of the family, because she thinks everything she is doing is alright. I think many of these "experts don't or don't like to understand mental illness because is not in their interest. I am never herd from any doctor to advice my wife to change her behavior and listen to me and in the house family ,but they giving her lots of information's about her rights so she later abuses that. The doctors have a lot of power, but they are not held accountable when things go wrong.

They behave as they have all the answers and suggestions but no solutions. I believe that if the doctor took greater time and responsibility to conduct assessments properly and take time to discuss with me and my family my wife's daily life experiences, they would be much better placed to develop the treatment plans. Treatment of the mental illness cannot be concentrated on treating only the ill person, because there are more than 2-3 people in the family that are involved. Why suffer silently, emotionally, physically and financially.

I and my family pay dearly for decisions doctors and medical staff make. When they ignore my suggestions, I and my family then need to live with various behaviors my wife exhibits. She may start arguing with out reason, yeling, she may cry for lengthy periods, verbally and sometimes physically assault people, wasting water, electricity, using excessive amount of detergents, shampoos or damaging other things.

In the past we had regular police intervention with no help no advice and no results except when she assaulted my mother and been placed on good behavior bond. She has a health problem and I believe because the doctors refuse to include me in the treatment process which they make faulty decisions leading to my wife's erratic and violent behavior.

Mentally ill people must have behavior counseling and to be told their responsibilities and have to listen to their careers and not only their rights. Doctors and medical staff never have to deal with this, but I and my family do almost daily. They don't coming in their homes to be greeted with arguments and yelling, never they been disturbed in their slip because their partner constantly moving or jumping during their dreams.

For this reason I believe families and careers should be involved with any discussions about treatment. Further to this doctors should negotiate these options with me not with my wife. Who in their right mind would be making drastic decisions with a person that is mentally unwell and unfit? Person who can't make difference what is right and what is wrong. Person who think someone from outside love them more then those around them. It's a crazy system and it need to change for the benefit of mentally ill and their families.

Also families and carrers must have better protection from abuses and assaults, from the ill and from this outside the family , by clearing the rights they have. Mental illness cant be excuses for abusing or even killing someone. By living in constant arguments, yelling, screaming and fighting in my case no only from my wife but from her family also the health of the family deteriorates. Everyone likes to live in happy and healthy family and I am not different . Four years ago I have been diagnosed with brain tumor and for a person who works 60 hours a week and still finding time for education and planning for the family future, I am slowly becoming depressed and becoming less and less interested in achievements.

My son has developed aggressive behavior at home and at school. The school has referred him to the Adolescence Mental Health Team for assessment. Despite this they didn't find anything wrong I am concerned about my sons health giving it prevalent on my wife's side of the family, and living in constant family arguments is going to affect him in the long term. The current system not only don't solve mental illness but creating more mentally ill peoples in the long run.

This is one more reason for everyone to be mentally checked before getting married. This system allows carrers to become so overburdened caring for their loved ones then the carrers become depressed and sick. In a current situation I see no bright future for us to be together and I am unsure for how long will tolerate this behavior ,not only for my benefit but specially for my sons future.

I think the whole system needs a total overhaul, and there needs to be much greater emphasis on the carrers and families.

This system promotes family break-up because it places extraordinary pressure and burdened of care of carrers especially if the career has to go to work , but virtually no support , morally or financially because families with mentally ill person have more expenses because of their constant demands ,lack of judgment about spending and not listening to advices.



Despite around a many organizations who are there to provide help or advice all of them turn you back when you ask for help and they are mostly interested in keeping their irresponsible jobs and all of them has to be reviewed and clear responsibilities to be imposed on them.

IN TIMES OF CRISIS WE ARE ALONE.

Current government initiative for employing mentally ill people and people with disabilities are a good start to make them more active and will help in developing better behavior but strict rules have to be made with the employer to be prevented from harassments and discrimination and the demands from the bosses and their colleagues. My wife has been employed for the last four years and at the beginning she's been doing a very good job for the mentally ill persons, but after some co-workers found out about her sickness they start to harass her and even the complaints to the manager didn't help much until she put the formal written complaint to the higher manager. She's been changed on different positions but with these changes they put so much pressure and demands so her health start to deteriorate these things need to be strictly enforced in the law.

I hope my concerns are taken into consideration and would like to be informed about results of this enquiry.

Yours sincerely,

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