

# 2019 Submission - Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

SUB.0002.0028.0598

Name

[REDACTED]

## **What are your suggestions to improve the Victorian community's understanding of mental illness and reduce stigma and discrimination?**

"Education. At all levels of the community, starting from the young up. Start with mental health awareness in schools. If it is happening it is clearly not enough. Mental illness is just another illness, even though it may manifest in more extreme ways. We should all be on the lookout for it, and it should be easier to get help for people. Schools, workplaces etc should have counsellors so that all can seek help when required. If it is seen as just a normal thing to seek help, then this will help reduce the fear and stigma of asking for help for the mentally ill. Campaigns to show the world that mental illness affects people from all walks of life and it is possible to live a full life despite it. An acquaintance of mine did not want to seek help for her overly anxious young child because a friend told her that if she sought help from a psychologist or psychiatrist the records of this may follow her into adulthood and may impact her ability to get a job, health or life insurance, etc. Hopefully this child will not go on to suffer from mental illness all her life. Campaigns should be run to allay people's fears of such things occurring. Also safeguards should be put in place to ensure that a person's medical history not be used against them. Many medications for mental illnesses eg, antipsychotics are available on authority for schizophrenia, bipolar disorder etc. We must ensure that this information is not used against a person at any stage of their life. Again there must be greater safeguards."

## **What is already working well and what can be done better to prevent mental illness and to support people to get early treatment and support?**

"I have no idea what is working well. All schools should have counsellors (more than 1 if necessary) to help children who are having problems. Governments and schools should not merely be interested in producing straight A students. The focus these days is on more and more studies especially from an early age to help them excel. Let's get our kids into the best schools let's just keep pushing them. What about those who can't keep up or who have mental health issues? Where will they go? What will happen to them? Surely the fact they can't keep up may impact their mental health. The focus should be on helping all children with greater emphasis on those who are struggling more academically and those with mental health issues. It isn't enough for the school to tell the parent that their child is behind or skipping school or whatever. There must be greater support. There are very few schools for children with mental health issues which can provide them greater support. I was told by a school counsellor that the govt ones were closed years ago. Liberal govts slash costs, but it is unacceptable to do this to children. They must reinvest in children's health and future. If mental health care is required you are usually on your own trying to find the relevant help. Unless someone can guide you in the right direction, what hope do you have? Even when you know what you need there is no guarantee that anyone will take you on, and they can drop you when it suits them without caring for your welfare as was experienced by our family. The system is distressing and even cruel. And what about the cost? All mental health services should be subsidised by Medicare. Religious institutions should also be

targeted. Condemning those who are different should not be acceptable in this country. Their ideas can cause much hurt in vulnerable individuals. "

### **What is already working well and what can be done better to prevent suicide?**

"Again I don't know what is working well. Again more education of the community as a whole, from the young and up. Teaching resilience in our young. Teaching tolerance. It is okay to be who you are. We should educate people that condemning those that we see as different is not helpful. (Such as rugby players who don't like gays). Looking for signs and if people are worried, then friends, families should be able to get help. Those who are unwell are not always in a position to seek help. A person may not be suicidal at the moment but if left without, they just might. More outreach workers. If health care workers have lost touch with someone, they must try to reconnect. Don't merely write them off. Just because a child is over 18 also doesn't mean that the family should not be consulted. Counsellors at schools and workplaces."

### **What makes it hard for people to experience good mental health and what can be done to improve this? This may include how people find, access and experience mental health treatment and support and how services link with each other.**

"The pressures to be the best are too great. The media push this but so does society as a whole. Schools push this fuelled by government. Religions do not embrace diversity (they just pretend to). God help you if you are different. Religions should not be allowed to dictate social policy. They must be told to move with the times. Workplaces also pressure people. It is not enough to do the work or helping customers. It is about how much money can you make or save the company or how fast can you work. We even see this in the way doctors treat patients. You get 10 minutes, only 2 conditions can be discussed. Everything else will cost extra or another appointment. What hope does a mentally ill person have of discussing their problems fully. It is hard to find the right mental health service. Who is there to help you. And how do you get them to take you on. Too many psychiatrists for example say they are full up, especially children's ones. What do you do then? This nightmare was experienced by our family. What about special schools that help support kids with mental health issues. There are too few and they are private. Why are there no public ones? I have been told there were public ones years ago but were closed by the govt. Only the lucky ones who hear about them and can afford them may get to send their children there. "

### **What are the drivers behind some communities in Victoria experiencing poorer mental health outcomes and what needs to be done to address this?**

"Poverty, lack of education, lack of employment opportunities, lack of mental health services in all communities, and lack of money means poorer mental health outcomes. Rural communities are even worse off. Get the NBN up and running ASAP and use it for more video consultations for those who live too far from services etc. This is the 21st century, let's embrace all it has to offer. What is needed is more money from govt. Also how about making a deal with multinational corporations that shirk their tax paying responsibilities. Tell them (pressure them) into making yearly donations to help with mental health. A million dollars a year is nothing to them and it can be tax deductible,"

### **What are the needs of family members and carers and what can be done better to support them?**

"Families etc need to know what help is available, how to access it and accessing help should be easy to do. Families should be included in the information provided by health care professionals

so they can best help their loved ones, regardless of age. Help should be affordable and subsidised by Medicare. Respite and support for families and carers."

**What can be done to attract, retain and better support the mental health workforce, including peer support workers?**

Obviously more money is required so that a organisations can employ and retain the workers. Campaigns to convince more doctors to become psychiatrists. Campaigns to convince more people to study courses that will produce more mental health workers.

**What are the opportunities in the Victorian community for people living with mental illness to improve their social and economic participation, and what needs to be done to realise these opportunities?**

"If mental illness is poorly treated and supported, then peoples lives will be very chaotic and retaining a job may be impossible. Not all workplaces, especially small business, are able to accommodate the mentally ill if they cannot fulfil their duties on a consistent basis. Govt along with larger industries may be able to work together to provide work for these people. Perhaps large companies who do not pay tax may be encouraged to fulfil their social obligations to the community by providing such employment. A large company with a greater workforce is more capable of absorbing workers who may at times be absent due to poor mental health issues. Large companies should also be encouraged to employ counsellors as all people at various times require help, not just the mentally ill. Counsellors available to all employees would certainly lessen the stigma associated with seeking help. Companies who employ disabled workers may also be able to help. If greater, more frequent and consistent support is provided to the mentally ill, to ensure they stay on track with meds etc then hopefully consistent employment is possible, leading to greater economic participation which at the same time will improve their social participation. "

**Thinking about what Victorias mental health system should ideally look like, tell us what areas and reform ideas you would like the Royal Commission to prioritise for change?**

"Psychologist fees should be subsidised my Medicare so that more people can afford them. Many medications which are used to treat various symptoms of mental illness are not subsidied by the govt because they are used outside the prescribing guidelines. eg, antipsychotics are used for anxiety and OCD. Many are cheap and some aren't but of course often the most vulnerable cannot afford them either way if they are not on the PBS. These medications should immediately be be allowed on the PBS. We have cancer patients accessing far more expensive meds to buy them a few more months of life which is the honourable thing to do, but we deny a major group of society a chance at a more normal and hopeful very, very long life. Of course there is stigma associated with mental health, when not all people are treated equally, even by the govt. More money and greater resources are required ASAP. Forget submarines and armed forces. People are far more important. More outreach workers to go TO the mentally ill when they can't leave their house and to check up on people who have dropped off the radar. Civil libertarians will say that you have no right to drag people to clinics, work etc if they don't want to go. In my family's experience some times you have to. Sometimes people want to be dragged off but don't actually know it, or just can't do it by themselves. (Of course there will be some who just can't, but we should all be able to say we tried). More doctors, hospitals, clinics etc. More schools that specialise in supporting children with mental illness to help keep them engaged in their education, to help them learn to socialise with others, to show them how worthy they are, so that they can go on and be the person they would like to be. Tell the govt, it isn't enough to just nurture the

brightest minds, we must nurture ALL minds even those who are flawed. Start educating from a young age. More counsellors in all schools, in large workplaces, in all govt departments so that help is available to all. This will help to minimise the stigma associated with seeking help. Large companies who avoid paying tax must contribute to the social fabric of society. Encourage, coerce, blackmail or whatever it takes, to get them to take on more employees with mental illness, help fund more clinics, schools, work with researchers to help fund research into new drugs, etc or whatever is needed. They can have naming rights, tax deductions, it really doesn't matter as long as they contribute to society in a more meaningful way and society as a whole reaps the benefits. Ask famous people, successful people in their field, from all walks of life who live with mental illness to speak out about how they live with mental illness. (I once heard a CEO of a company speak about living with schizophrenia). Tell religious institutions and others to stop condemning people in the community that they perceive to be different. Their comments are nothing more than BULLYING and can lead to anxiety and depression. It has no place in our modern society (despite what a particular sportsman in the news thinks so). Mentally ill patients can stop going to appointments, work etc. when their illness worsens. The organisations supporting them will take them off their books if they cannot contact them. If possible this should not be allowed to happen. Perhaps they simply can't re-engage with treatment because their illness has worsened. There must be follow up to ensure that people don't just fall through the cracks and lost forever. Outreach workers would be invaluable, also more engagement with family if possible. Respite and more support for families and carers. "

**What can be done now to prepare for changes to Victorias mental health system and support improvements to last?**

"Ask the govt for more money immediately. There is no other way. Tell them they have neglected the mentally ill long enough. Allocate it to any underfunded mental health organisations immediately. Access to PBS subsidised medications immediately. Get help from large companies immediately with employment, funds etc. See what is being done that works well and expand on it. Allow psychologist fees to be subsidised by medicare. Have people speak out to show that you can suffer from mental illness and still lead a fruitful life. Encourage researchers and drug companies to develop new medications. Employ counsellors for all schools immediately. If anyone has dropped off the radar, mental health care providers should reinstate contact with them to find out how they are."

**Is there anything else you would like to share with the Royal Commission?**

N/A

My name is [REDACTED] and this is my own experience with the mental health system. I have to say that the chain of events that my actions caused were my own fault and that actions taken by others were certainly justified, but the treatment of me as a mentally ill person was cruel in my opinion.

When my son was in year 5, he began experiencing school refusal. This continued into year 6, a repeat of year 6 at another school and eventually into year 7 and 8 of secondary school and even beyond. In year 7 the secondary school tried to support him as did the school counsellor, however the problem continued and got progressively worse.

At the same time my daughter who had not had a very happy time at school, decided in year 12 to take a gap year before uni. As I had feared, gap year to her meant not doing anything at all, no work or travel, just staying at home in bed all day and this would eventually become not a gap year but a gap of 3-4 years and a host of mental issues.

My husband was no support at all, never willing to change the way he does things. We are both pharmacists and have our own small business. I was working full-time, while he worked the "afternoon shift". That meant he slept until 2pm and then came to work and after closing did other things until midnight. We had no other pharmacists so I had no help. I could not even go to any appointments because he wouldn't cover for me. I was trapped but did the best I could because the pharmacy was a way for me to socialise with people, the staff that I thought were my friends and the customers who made me feel as though I mattered to their lives.

Our son's school would call asking where he was. No one would answer their phone calls at home so the school would call me at work. I would call home and beg him to go to school. Every day I would also beg our daughter to get up and do something with her life, go back to school, or get a job, or come to work for us in our family business, but she wouldn't. Meanwhile my husband would just sleep through all this until 2pm then come to work later and stay till very late.

I was trapped in this train wreck that was our life. I began to fall apart and became quite desperate. Even so, I continued to work to the best of my ability. I always took work seriously because that is my nature. My obsessiveness would never allow me to do anything detrimental to any customer. But I was in a very fragile state. The only person worried about me was our son's school counsellor. I could not see a future beyond this mess. I had become sick of my existence and wanted on one level to end it all, but not really wanting to at the same time. So I decided to take a few Clonazepam tablets that my husband had. I only took about 5-6 x 0.5mg. Being a pharmacist I knew this would do nothing more than give me a long sleep where I could shut out my world and make everyone take notice that I could no longer cope with it all. But my husband dragged me out of bed and still made me go to work, despite the drowsy state I was in. In fact, I did this twice, about 1-2 weeks apart. I wanted to hurt my family and make them see how I was hurting and that they were destroying their lives and our family too.

After the second attempt my husband did take notice because he hired a pharmacist who was to take over some of my days. I was working with her for 1-2 weeks so she could become a little more confident. So, some help was on its way.

At this time, I had also told the school counsellor what I had done and I also admitted it to a former staff member (who was helping for a few days) hoping for support.

The school counsellor was very worried and at first called my doctor. He asked me if I would spend some time in hospital for help. I said okay, hoping my husband would take notice and do more, but he merely said that if could get someone to cover my shift I could go. Of course, I didn't. After the second time she told me she would call the [REDACTED] to help me. The [REDACTED] came to my house on a Friday to see me,

a psychiatrist and 2 nurses. The psychiatrist did all the talking. I was still in a fragile state. They all sat in my housing smiling and said that they were there to help me if I wanted it. I said yes. I told them my story. They asked about going into hospital. I explained what my husband had said last time and that it would not be possible. I also said that he had hired a pharmacist to help with the work. I explained that I would rather start seeing a psychiatrist ASAP for help. I was hoping they might be able to arrange this. They left saying that the nurses would visit for a while for support and I was hopeful that other assistance would follow. I was feeling better thinking I had someone on my side. On Monday I was called at work by the [REDACTED] psychiatrist to inform me that she had reported me to AHPRA because of my conduct as she was legally obliged to do so. She did not ask how I was or how I was feeling. There was NO offer of support of any kind for my mental health, nor any talk of what I should do. She merely said good luck and good bye. This person who is supposedly a psychiatrist, had just washed her hands of me. I NEVER heard from THAT person EVER again nor anyone else from their organisation. The nurses did however visit a few times to make sure I was okay and not about to kill myself. They were kind but were only there to listen to my rantings about the events that would follow and put up with my crying. They all told me that what had happened was a good thing and now I would get help the help I needed, and all would be better again. This I found to be very patronising. In fact, many people said the same. Somehow my problems would magically disappear.

The former staff member I had confided in, who was in fact a former nurse had not been supportive. She decided that my actions were unacceptable and reported me to AHPRA as well. This, a person I had considered my friend, had also passed judgement. She has never once sought to find out what became of me in all the years since she reported me. In the past she had often shared stories of patients she had nursed and the concerns she had for their health, but obviously not for someone like me. On our last meeting she told me a story of someone we both knew who she thought was behaving stupidly because he had expressed to his former wife that he would kill himself. She had nothing but contempt for him. This in my opinion was an inappropriate response from someone in the nursing profession. There is no room for people like that in nursing.

So AHPRA called twice that Monday to tell me of the 2 reports. I was informed that the board would meet ASAP to decide my future. I was allowed to keep working until then. I called the insurance company with whom I had indemnity insurance to seek help.

A solicitor was appointed to take my case. I explained how this awful mess had unfolded, but of course none of what I told him really mattered, I had behaved unlawfully, I had breached pharmacy code of conduct, had put my customers safety in jeopardy and so had to be punished accordingly. The solicitor was merely there to represent me in my legal dealings with AHPRA and nothing more. AHPRA met a week later and I was deemed to be a danger to the public and so I was suspended from working as a pharmacist until it could be proved that I was no longer "dangerous". I was ordered to find a psychiatrist to treat me ASAP and I would have to meet their psychiatrist who would decide my mental state and decide when I could return to work. Initially they recommended that I not even be allowed to enter a pharmacy on my own. My solicitor argued this was unfair as I was on medication and would need to fill my prescription from time to time, so they dropped that requirement. Did they think that my mere presence in a pharmacy would pose a danger to others?

So within just over a week from the report to AHPRA, I was suspended.

I was suddenly left utterly alone with my life changed forever. I take full responsibility for my actions. They were foolish, childish, dangerous to me and my customers, certainly in breach of my professional responsibilities and have caused me shame and guilt that I will carry for the rest of my life. We did not tell

anyone what I had done nor it's consequences apart from 2-3 people that needed to know. Customers, friends, staff, my aunty, and especially my husband's family were kept in the dark. (My in-laws already had a poor opinion of me). They were all told my absence from work was due to back problems. If my parents had been alive I could never have told them of my shameful behaviour. My only excuse was that I did what I did because I was slowly dying inside.

The following week, the pharmacy board were wanting to know why I didn't have a psychiatrist yet and why hadn't I seen their doctor yet. Why? Because my family doctor didn't know any psychiatrists and the one I had seen many years earlier could not be found.

He sent an open referral to [REDACTED], but no one would take me as a patient. One of the [REDACTED] nurses knew of some names, but everyone was too busy. Finally quite by accident, after about 3 weeks, a psychiatrist at [REDACTED] accepted me as a patient. I will always be grateful to her. She was the only person up until now (other than the school counsellor) who cared enough to want to help me.

Any way demand from AHPRA just went on and on from there. The whole ordeal seemed surreal. I had completely fallen apart and in my vulnerable state was crying out for help, but because I had done something stupid, I was treated like a common criminal that had to be punished. If instead I had contracted the Ebola virus (which was killing thousands at around the same time), I would also have been regarded as a danger to the public, but I would have been hospitalised and surrounded by doctors, nurses and others desperately trying to save my life. If I had been my next door neighbour, I would NOT have been regarded as a danger to the community and I would have been given help for my mental illness. Instead, because I was a mentally ill PHARMACIST, who had reached the depths of despair, there were no doctors for me, just a solicitor, and a tribunal that was breathing down my neck and treating me like a criminal. Where was the medical assistance for me? Advertisements advise the public to seek help if experiencing mental crises. I asked for help. Why was none given to me? If I had in fact intended to kill myself, I certainly would have done so during this awful time. And no one would have given a damn.

AHPRA were not interested in me at all. Their only concern is their own agenda. I know their job is to protect the public, not me, but if this is how an organisation who is representative of pharmacists treats vulnerable people in our community, and of course it is, then is it a wonder we need a Royal Commission. They even had the gall to suggest in their correspondence that if I was experiencing a mental crisis, I should seek help from [REDACTED]. If it wasn't so serious it would have been funny.

The [REDACTED] team was the same. The psychiatrist reading from her carefully crafted script smiled caringly at me and promised help. When my responses didn't fit the ones she had on her script, she didn't want to have anything to do with me again. Clearly, I didn't fit the [REDACTED] idea of the mentally ill people that they are interested in.

This is taken from the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Why did none of the above apply to me. Instead I was left to fend for myself and find my own doctor. My experience left me alone, with no support, no job, little contact with the outside world, no-one to talk to, trapped in my home with my son who wouldn't go to school and had withdrawn from life, my daughter who had withdrawn from life and my husband who slept till 2pm, then went to work and came home at midnight. My only escape from my horrible life had been taken away. I spent the next few months at home crying, being angry, hating myself and everyone around me, wallowing in self-pity and in the guilt and shame of what I had done. By the time the pharmacy board allowed me to go back to work I was completely traumatised and too scared to go back and not sure that I even wanted to. And of course, I couldn't tell anyone what had happened. I had to hold it in.

Eventually I went back to work, but the damage was done. Initially I was having panic attacks. My hatred for my profession had grown while I was away so I no longer cared about being a pharmacist. I had spent time cultivating new customers before my trouble. When I got back to work some had gone. I still continue to do the best I can but my heart is no longer in it. And despite "getting better" my life is still a train wreck and I fear the train is still hurtling towards destruction.

When the school counsellor heard what had happened to me, she was upset. She has referred other parents to the [REDACTED] team and they had been helped. This time it backfired. She said that next time she would have to be careful who she refers to them. This will clearly be a backward step for mental health, and may end tragically for some other poor unfortunate person in the wrong profession.

I had always told my children if they were ever struggling with a mental crisis, that they should seek help. Now I say to them, that they should tell me. I will get them the help they need, as in fact I have had to do so many times in the last few years. I am their mother, so I will always put their interests above EVERYTHING and EVERYONE else.

One last issue I have with poor treatment occurred after I returned to work. One of the requirements by AHPRA was that they could check up on me to ensure I was complying with their rules. One day when I was not at work 3 women from AHPRA turned up and began to ask the staff how often I work etc while customers were there too. They spoke to people without any regard to my privacy. As I had not told anyone about my problems this caused me further distress. The response of AHPRA was that it is not their concern that I had kept the whole affair quiet. Again, no understanding or concern for me.

Sorry for such a long-winded letter. What I am trying to say is that I was desperate for help, but instead I was made to feel like a criminal every step of the way. Being mentally ill is not a criminal offence. It is an illness. I was told many times that I was being too over emotional and melodramatic. But mental illness is over emotional, melodramatic, and messy. It is all about extreme behaviours. Is it a wonder there is stigma associated with mental illness? How can anyone ever speak openly about it when society doesn't understand, and even professional bodies can hide behind their rules so they don't ever have to care.

Thank you,



My name is [REDACTED] and this is my family's second experience with the mental health system.

When our son was in year 5 in 2012, he began experiencing school refusal. This continued into year 6 and because we thought he was still a little immature we had him repeat year 6 at another school. But the problem continued and was getting worse. The school had a counsellor who tried to help but to no avail. In year 7 the secondary school we sent him to was very accommodating allowing him certain concessions to help him cope but the problem continued and became so bad that by year 8 he had had almost no actual schooling. This school had a counsellor who tried everything to help him. We also sought help from a psychologist who is an expert in school refusal and a paediatrician experienced in behavioural problems. Even though he could not articulate what he was feeling, it was thought that he probably had anxiety/depression so he was commenced on an SSRI antidepressant. Despite all this effort and because by the middle of year 8 he was not attending any classes at all, we had to leave the school.

A woman from some other organisation whose name I have forgotten but was also involved, suggested a different type of school for our son. Berengarra, a school for children of normal intelligence who are having trouble attending school due to anxiety, depression, adhd etc. was suggested. We enrolled our son but again he wouldn't go. Someone suggested getting help from [REDACTED]. We were referred to them. They took him on and asked us to attend for family therapy. They would also take over the counselling and medication.

Our other problem is that our whole family is a train wreck. At the same time my daughter who had not had a very happy time at school, decided in year 12 in 2014, to take a gap year before uni. As I had feared, gap year to her meant not doing anything at all, no work or travel, just staying at home in bed all day and this would eventually become not a gap year but a gap of 3-4 years and a host of mental issues. So, getting her to family sessions became impossible.

My husband was no support at all. We are both pharmacists and have our own small business. He worked the what he called, the "afternoon shift". That meant he slept until 2pm, then went to work and after closing did other things until midnight. He couldn't come to the sessions because it was on too late in the afternoon, but the truth is he wouldn't have come anyway.

Eventually I was the only one turning up so the family sessions were scrapped. Meanwhile counselling and management of medication continued, and he was asked to take part in group sessions for last term of year 8. He managed to attend for the last three weeks of the year which was encouraging. This success was due to a family friend who accompanied him to the class on one occasion and then would come to the house in the morning to check that he was up and going to his sessions. The group would also call to ensure he was going. Our son found this very helpful.

However, the next year after the holidays, we were back to square one. He wouldn't go to school. The psychiatrist thought the medication wasn't helping so she wanted to wean him off it and start something new. So we did. The day that they were to start him on a new medication, we instead were told that the psychologist was moving on to a new position and they didn't want to appoint a new one to our case, and because our son couldn't tell us if he thought the medications were helping him or not, they decided that we should see someone else privately. I was stunned and in tears. Clearly the whole situation was just too much trouble for them. I had taken our son there that day hoping for something new to help, perhaps a new glimmer of hope but instead we were dumped. They did not care that they had stopped his medications and that he would now be in limbo again. They did not care that our son had missed almost all of years 7 and 8 and now year 9 was going to go the same way. How can a government organisation calling themselves [REDACTED] treat a young boy in that fashion? A

boy who is kind and gentle and not a troublemaker. We had sought their help because we were desperate and because he was stuck in whatever the problem was. Just as things were improving, they take him off all medication and then send him away. What sort of professional gives up on a child? One that is not a true professional nor any good at their job. I consider them to be incompetent as a competent person would not act that way.

I asked for a referral to someone else but they said they did not do that. They gave us 2 names but these doctors would not take us on. I asked anyone I knew but no one knew of any child psychiatrists. I rang numbers I found online. They all said to send a referral and the doctors would consider it. I had become desperate yet again as our son had stopped attending school again.

The nightmare had begun once again.

Our daughter was seeing a psychiatrist at the same time. He was young and had good rapport with her so I begged him to take her brother on as a patient. The psychiatrist was concerned at all that had happened to our son and kindly agreed to help. We will forever be grateful to him. He has helped our son to get back on track and at present is doing well and not missing school at all. Next year he will have to go to a new school and I am worried about him, but we will get through it.

The psychologist and psychiatrist should be made accountable for their actions towards my son. They set his progress back for quite a while. They had no right to do that. He did not deserve that.

Another very upsetting situation involved our daughter. Her psychiatrist had initially referred her to an outreach worker as our daughter would not leave the house. She liked this person and developed a rapport with her. All was going well until our daughter's condition worsened due to debilitating OCD and as a result could not bring herself to contact her outreach support person. A few months passed. On questioning I found out what happened and so I asked for the support person to call my daughter to help her. The reply came back, that because our daughter had not bothered to make any appointments in all that time, the support person had taken on other people and was too busy. My daughter was devastated. She had built up a relationship with this person, she trusted this person and valued this person's help and just when she was unable to reach out, she was dumped. I was furious and sent a scathing message. The response was that they had other outreach workers that could help her. This would mean 2 years or so down the drain, start again, tell the story again. My daughter decided not to bother. How can such things happen to such vulnerable people? If someone drops off the radar, then every effort should be made to reconnect otherwise they may be lost forever.

As it turns out the outreach worker did contact my daughter and me to say that she would see my daughter again. This was good news. My daughter still hasn't been able to contact her because of her illness. I can only pray that things will improve.

What I am trying to say is that mentally ill people can't just be tossed away because some one decides they can't be bothered anymore or it is just too hard, without first ensuring that they have done all they could and if not, they should be passed on to someone else who can, not just leave the unwell patient to fend for themselves. Because they can't fend for themselves.

Again, sorry for another long-winded letter.

████████████████████