

Good health insurance is key

by Kathy in North Carolina

Several years ago, I experienced chronic depression in which I could no longer function at work and at home. The painful symptoms of depression were so extreme that I tried to take my own life. Months before this happened, I sought out professional help, but without insurance I ended up in a mental health system being treated with no understanding and no empathy from the counselor who assisted me. I walked out of the counselor's office even more depressed.

After my suicide attempt, I was referred to a counselor from a community health care agency. This particular counselor had the patience and the ability to actively listen to me. She was able to pinpoint what I needed to do to manage my depression. The outcome was very positive. I went back to school with the thought of eventually going back to work. This was just the beginning of a road to further knowledge. I was studying in the social work program. I had to do many assessments and exercises about my strengths and weaknesses, my family history, how I grew up and so forth. My father committed suicide in 1977 and my brother committed suicide in 1984. At that time, mental illness was not an issue to be looked at. Mainly, it was the question of why they did what they did. When having to assess my family and their behavior and what I went through with depression, I understood more why they did what they did.

In 1998, my daughter was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, in which at first the diagnosis was depression. She had suicidal tendencies, leading her to a series of hospitalizations. Her father had excellent health insurance on her, even though it did not pay as well for mental health. Still she was able to receive private mental health care, giving her the appropriate treatments. A few years after her father and I divorced, he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and schizoaffective disorder. He did manage to maintain a full-time job in which his insurance covered the appropriate care that enabled him to make it to work every day. He also had an employer who was understanding whenever he had to take time off from work.

I write this story to say my daughter and her father were the lucky ones since they had the insurance to receive appropriate treatments (therapy, medications). Even though I didn't have insurance back then, I was fortunate to end up with that particular counselor. This is rare though since there are so many people out there going through a system where the case load is extremely high. The results are lack of individualized attention to conclude a positive outcome. A good health insurance plan is a key to successful treatment and too, it depends on the willingness of the patient.