

Health Bulletin



Mentally Ill At Increased Risk For Cardiovascular Disease New Simple Measures Program Provides Information, Tips And Tools To Help Those Living With Bipolar Disorder And Schizophrenia Improve Their Overall Wellness

(NAPSA)—Cardiovascular disease (CVD), a disease of the heart and blood vessels that includes conditions such as heart attack, heart failure, chest pain and stroke, is the leading cause of death in the United States. However, research shows that the nearly 8 million American adults living with serious mental illnesses such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia may be at an even greater risk for developing cardiovascular disease than the general population.

People living with these illnesses have an increased prevalence of risk factors for CVD, including obesity, high cholesterol and high blood sugar. In fact, people living with these illnesses die an average of 20 years earlier than the general population, with heart disease as the leading cause of death.

Lifestyle factors such as diet and exercise play a large role in the increase of cardiovascular health risks, but certain anti-psychotic medications taken to control psychiatric symptoms can exacerbate these risks. It is important for people living with these illnesses to work closely with their physicians to get their risk factors monitored, to learn about their treatment options and whether adjusting medication may help reduce risks, and to incorporate healthy lifestyle habits.

Simple Measures for Improving

Wellness in Mental Health is an educational program developed by Pfizer and independent medical and nutrition experts designed to help those living with bipolar disorder and schizophrenia improve their overall wellness and reduce their risks for heart disease. Simple Measures provides information through educational materials and community seminars to help patients, their loved ones and physicians adopt simple steps towards wellness such as improving food choices; increasing exercise

daily; reducing smoking; keeping track of risk factors including weight gain, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels; improving patient-

physician communication about risk factors; and understanding treatment options.

“When treating patients with a mental illness like schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, we need to focus on both the mind and body,” said Michael Sernyak, M.D., professor of psychiatry at the Yale University School of Medicine. “It is very important that patients work closely with their physicians to understand their treatment options and associated side effects, get their risk factors checked regularly, and discuss the positive impact healthy lifestyle choices can have on overall health.”

For more information about Simple Measures or to find out if there is a seminar taking place near you, visit www.simplemeasures.com.

