

Acute Training Solutions

Personality Disorder & Paranoia - Facts & stats

Facts about portrayals of mental health in TV dramas and soaps

Research was carried out around portrayals of mental health in television drama & soaps, this found:

- Over a 3 month period 74 programmes contained storylines on mental health issues of these there were 33 instances of violence to others and 53 examples of harm to self
- Almost half were sympathetic portrayals, but these often portrayed the characters as tragic victims
- The most commonly referred to condition was depression, which was mentioned 19 times, breakdown was mentioned 8 times and bi-polar 7
- 63% of references to mental health in TV soaps and drama were “pejorative, flippant or unsympathetic” terms included: “crackpot”, “a sad little psycho”, “basket case”, “where did you get her from?”, “Care in the Community?” and “he was looney tunes”

Statistics about violence and mental illness

- The majority of violent crimes and homicides are committed by people who do not have mental health problems.
- People with mental health problems are more dangerous to themselves than they are to others: 90 per cent of people who die through suicide in the UK are experiencing mental distress
- In 2009, the total population in England and Wales aged 16 or over was just over 43 million. It is estimated that about one in six of the adult population will have a significant mental health problem at any one time, (more than 7 million people). Given this number and the 50–70 cases of homicide a year involving people known to have a mental health problem at the time of the murder, clearly the statistics data do not support the sensationalised media coverage about the danger that people with mental health problems present to the community.
- Substance abuse appears to play a role: The prevalence of violence is higher among people who have symptoms of substance abuse (discharged psychiatric patients and non-patients).

Extracted from: A time to change - <http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/>