

# Being both mental health professional and carer:

Experiences of mental health  
services in Norway

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De pårørende, sier folk.  
De burde si vi.  
Vi pårørende.  
For vi er jo pårørende alle sammen



Vi er ektefeller og søsken.  
Vi er sønner og døtre.  
Vi er mødre og fedre.  
Vi er venner og naboer.  
Vi er de pårørende.

# Background

- carers of relatives with mental health problems comprise about 15% of the adult population. What about us, people who work in mental health services?
- a lack of literature on the experiences of carers who are also mental health professionals.
- our study sought to explore the experiences of such carers in engaging with mental health services.

# Method

- An online survey was completed by mental health professionals working in community and inpatient mental health services in Norway.
- Via a 16 item survey we assessed the
  - a) frequency of, and
  - b) content of the experiences of carers, and
  - c) level of satisfaction with mental health services.

# Results

- The sample comprised 453 mental health professionals (74% female, 50% aged 31-50 years) (1414 eligible, response rate for the survey 32.04%)
- 52% being carers and mostly for a parent (26%) or child (24%).
- Carers reported being very dissatisfied with
  - a) continuity of care (43% of carers) and
  - b) crisis plan information (38% of carers).

# Results cont'

- Half of carers reported having contact with the therapist, and
- 25% of these carers were satisfied with the contact.
- Negative experiences of carers related to Information, Decision making and Continuity of care

# Results, cont'

- Around half (51.66%) of the sample reported being carers for a relative with mental health problems and the most frequent profession of the carers was nursing (28%).
- half of the carers had between 6-20 years experience of working in mental health services, and
- 17.7% had received treatment for their own mental health problem. There were

# Results, cont'

- Nearly one fifth (19.5%) of relatives had received hospital inpatient treatment, and
- 38.8% of relatives were currently in treatment

# Results, cont'

- the most common reported mental health problem of relatives was depression (35%) while
- psychosis or anxiety were each reported for from around 15% of relatives.
- one in three of the relatives being currently in treatment.

# Positive and negative experiences:

- The positive experiences reflected improved treatment outcomes for the relative such as
  - *“She was very, very ill, but thanks to her therapist she is now without symptoms”.*
- Negative experiences included
  - *In a very long illness period the system showed little understanding of the total burden it was for my children and myself, to care for a chronically ill person”, and*
  - *The therapists found it difficult to relate to a mother with the same education and profession themselves”.*

# Conclusion

- compared to the general population of carers, there was a high frequency of mental health professionals who were carers.
- the majority of responses to satisfaction with the mental health services showed these carers were dissatisfied, and
- many responses showed this was in relation to communication with the services.

- Two thirds of carers reported dissatisfaction with the transition from one level of the mental health services to another.
- Improving information sharing and thus enlisting the resource of mental health professional+carers in the delivery of care for people with mental health problems is likely to provide better experiences for service users and families.

# Discussion

- Our study provides an estimate of rates of mental health professionals being carers and suggests an untapped resource for supporting people experiencing mental health problems in the use of mental health services.
- Given one in five of the carers in our sample had received treatment for their own mental health problems, the findings also suggest a risk of neglecting the needs of mental health professionals+carers.

the majority of responses to satisfaction with the mental health services showed the carers were dissatisfied.

this is consistent with findings reported for carers not necessarily identified as mental health professionals

# Apropos behovet for PAKKEFORLØP..

- **Continuity of care** was criticized by many of the carers both in ratings of
- satisfaction with services and in the free text responses.
- Two thirds of carers reported dissatisfaction with the transition from one level of the mental health services to another such as from a community mental health care center to primary care.
- Comments from carers included
  - a) *“the cooperation with the local community is not functioning at all”*
  - b) *“the biggest challenge in psychiatry and the rest of the treatment system is **the lack of continuity**”*.

# Strengths and limitations

- To our knowledge this is the first study to explore the experiences of carers who are mental health professionals.
- The study findings are therefore limited by the lack of comparative data in the literature.
- Our study yielded a moderate response rate (30%) compared to most online surveys

# Future research

- as one of the first studies to investigate the experiences of mental health professional+carers, our findings have identified important areas for further research.
- for example, determining prevalence rates for these carers, and
- in depth qualitative research, and
- to explore the potential experiences of role conflict and stigma in the workplace, and
- to develop training to raise awareness among mental health professionals of the dual role.

Takk for oppmerksomheten

