

Mental Health Medications Coalition Statement

WHO WE ARE:

We are a group of national and provincial organizations who work with, and represent individuals and families living with a wide range of mental health conditions and illnesses. Responding to concerns raised by our clients, members and constituents/stakeholders, we came together to gain better insight into their experiences with medications. We do not have a position on the efficacy of generic versus brand name medications; but rather wish to better understand direct experiences of people who rely on various medications as part of their mental health treatment.

WHAT WE KNOW:

- Medications are used to treat a wide range of mental health conditions and illnesses.
- There are many different medications used in mental health treatment; some are brand name and some are generic.
- Medication treatment is not a “one size fits all” scenario and there is a high variability in response to medication treatment, in regards to both efficacy and side effects. It can take a considerable amount of time to find the right medication(s) and dosage to achieve the desired level of symptom control.
- Many people using mental health medication have other concurrent physical and mental health conditions, and hence use more than one medication. This use of multiple medications can potentially cause issues with medication interaction and make it difficult to discern the side effects of particular medications.
- Empirical research evidence and anecdotal evidence from caregivers, patients and treating physicians shows that for some people there may be a decrease in the degree and length of symptom control and the increase in side effects when patients are switched from brand name to generic medication.
- At this time the extent of these issues is unknown to us. What we do know is that many individuals and families lack basic information and awareness about medications, generic substitution, and what to do when medications are not working/ stop working.
- Without awareness and knowledge patients, their caregivers and their prescribing physicians cannot make informed decisions about treatment options.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

There is insufficient information to allow us to fully understand whether substitution of generic medication is an issue for individuals and families living with mental health conditions and illnesses.

To better understand direct experiences with medications, we will create and launch a nation-wide survey requesting feedback from individuals, caregivers and healthcare providers on existing knowledge and experience with brand name and generic medications.