



Introduction

Research has shown that individuals with severe mental illness (SMI), including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, schizoaffective disorder and major depressive disorder, face a greater risk of developing many physical health problems. These health-related issues include:

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- Cardiovascular Disease
- Respiratory Disease
- Bowel Cancer
- Diabetes

Many factors contribute to poor physical health of individuals with SMI, including disparities in access, availability of health care and underutilization of health care services, and ineffective communication between members of the health care team. The continuity and coordination of care for individuals with SMI are essential for their physical and mental health and well-being. Therefore, mental health services should involve consideration of physical health needs as part of initial and ongoing care.



When caring for individuals with SMI, health care providers should be aware of an individual's coexisting physical illnesses and be cognizant of potential adverse medication reactions that may exacerbate and/or contribute to the individual's physical health conditions.

Therefore, this toolkit, based upon a thorough review of relevant literature, was developed to help both physical and mental health care providers administer quality care, minimize the risk of potential adverse health effects, enhance and encourage communication and continuity of care between medical and behavioral health providers, and improve the overall health and well-being of individuals with severe mental illness.

**Quality care is a team effort.
Thank you for playing a starring role!**

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