Going, Going, Gone: Declining Bed Numbers and Severe Mental Illness
Elizabeth Sinclair Hancq, the Treatment Advocacy Center

The number of psychiatric hospital beds that remain in state hospitals for people with serious mental illness whose treatment is not being, or cannot be, adequately addressed in a community setting has fallen to fewer than 12 beds per 100,000 population in the United States, the lowest level on record.

This shortage has set off a domino effect of unmet demand that is reflected in such consequences as individuals in psychiatric crisis being boarded for days and even weeks in hospital emergency departments while they wait for hospital admission. It has also resulted in inmates in psychiatric crisis being wait-listed for weeks and months in jails and prisons as they wait for admission to forensic beds. The lack of an adequate supply of psychiatric beds in a community contributes to the overrepresentation of people with severe mental illness in the criminal justice system and who experience homelessness.

This presentation will describe the trends in psychiatric bed capacity over the past 60 years and the consequences of failures of the mental health treatment system to provide a full continuum of care for people with serious mental illness.

The speaker, Elizabeth Hancq, is the Director of Research for the Treatment Advocacy Center. Elizabeth leads the organization’s Office of Research and Public Affairs (ORPA) and works with Treatment Advocacy Center staff and outside researchers to carry out its research agenda. She has co-authored multiple ORPA reports that have been cited in national media, including the Washington Post and Wall Street Journal, and has generated statistics that have been used as testimony by government officials in the highest levels of office. In addition, Elizabeth has published in prestigious academic journals including *JAMA Psychiatry* and *Nature Communications*.

Previously, Elizabeth worked in community health quality improvement and public health program implementation and evaluation in Washington, DC. Prior to her work in public health, Elizabeth served as a research assistant at Georgetown University Lombardi Cancer Center and as a research scientist at McGill University in behavioral neuroscience. Elizabeth earned her masters of public health degree in prevention and community health from George Washington University in Washington, DC, and her bachelor’s degree in physiology and neuroscience from McGill University in Montreal, Canada.

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