



INFORMATION SHEET

Individuals with Severe Mental Illness Have Significantly Increased Risk for Hospitalization and Death from COVID-19

Summary of Evidence:

Research has indicated that people with Severe mental illness (SMI) are at a significantly increased risk of being hospitalized or dying from COVID even after taking risk factors into account.^{1,2,3,4,5}

Several studies have shown that individuals with SMI are as much as 7-10 times more likely to contract COVID-19 and have a two to three times higher mortality rate than the general population,^{3,6,7} second only to people aged 80 years and older.² As well, SMI has been associated with a weaker immune system, and potentially a weaker immune response to vaccination¹.

Severe mental illness has been associated with many socioeconomic risk factors that contribute to an increased risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19.⁷ People with SMI face significant barriers to health care, having difficulty receiving care for their physical illnesses, often due to the stigmatization and negative attitudes of mental illness.⁸

As COVID-19 vaccines have rolled out in Ontario, mental health care providers and advocates have encouraged the inclusion of people with mental illness to be prioritized for vaccine allocation strategies.^{6,7}

We must now advocate for shorter wait time intervals between Covid-19 vaccine doses for individuals with a severe mental illness.

References:

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2. Nemani K; Li C; Olfson M; Blessing, E; Razavian, N; Chen, J; Petkova, E; Goff, D. Association of Psychiatric Disorders with Mortality Among Patients With COVID-19 Original Investigation. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2021.

3. De Hert, M; Mazereel,V. Detraux,J; Van Assche, K. Prioritizing COVID- 19 vaccination for people with severe mental illness. *World Psychiatry* 20:1 - February 2021

4. Barcella, CA; Polcwiartek, C; Mohr, GH; Hodges, G; Søndergaard, K; Bang, CN; Andersen, MP. Fosbøl, E; Køber, L; Schou, M; Torp-Pedersen, C; Kessing, LV; Gislason, G; Kragholm, K. Severe mental illness is associated with increased mortality and severe course of COVID-19. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavia*. 2021 Apr 24.



5. Wang Q, Xu R, Volkow ND. Increased risk of COVID-19 infection and mortality in people with mental disorders: analysis from electronic health records in the United States. Research Report. World Psychiatry 20:1 - February 2021

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8. DeHert, M; Cohen, D; Bobes, J. et al. Physical illness in patients with severe mental disorders. II. Barriers to care, monitoring and treatment guidelines, plus recommendations at the system and individual level. World Psychiatry, 10 (2001), pp. 138-151

Links to news stories:

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Mental Health Care Innovation and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Study finds schizophrenia raises risk of COVID-19 death as those with mental illness wait for vaccine (wxyz.com)

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