

Steve Lurie's letter to the Globe & Mail, September 1, 2011, in response to "Latest mental health strategy draft doesn't go far enough"

Andre Picard is wrong to suggest the mental health strategy needs to choose between brain science and social science. There is ample research indicating that community supports and psychiatric treatment promote recovery. Ontario's evidence on assertive community treatment teams demonstrates that multidisciplinary team based community care can reduce days in hospital by over 80% and reduce health care costs accordingly. Yet the recently published Public Accounts shows that Ontario spends only 1.3% of its health spending on community mental health care. Dr Stephen Hwang's research on homelessness and mental illness shows that up to 200,000 Canadians living with mental illness are homeless or vulnerably housed. The Mental Health Commission is correct in promoting increased access to community services and housing as well as peer support to promote recovery. The strategy will also need to encourage governments to increase the mental health share of health spending if we want to effectively help more than 1 in 3 people living with mental illness.