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To Editor:

People with Schizophrenia Employed as Professionals and Managers:
Initial Evidence and Exploration

The prognosis for schizophrenia has been pessimistic, particularly regarding the capacity of individuals with this diagnosis to work or achieve work that is other than low-wage or entry level (Baron & Salzer, 2000; Botterbusch, 2000; McCrohan et al., 1994). In prior studies vocational achievement overall has been shown to correlate with: symptom management (Anthony et al., 1995; Fabian, 1999), use of social supports (Rogers, Anthony & Lyass, 2004), work experience prior to disability (Mueser, Salyers & Mueser 2001; Anthony & Jansen, 1984), and inversely to disability severity and mental health history (Tsang et al., 2000; Mueser et al, 2001).

A recent study offers evidence that some individuals with schizophrenia have achieved mid and upper level careers. A national mail survey (composed primarily of checklists and Likert scaled items) was undertaken to identify and describe professionals and managers with serious mental illness. A non-representative, purposive sampling strategy was employed using self-reported data collected from 1997 through 1999. Of the 495 eligible respondents, fifty-nine (12%) reported having a diagnosis of schizophrenia or related disorder.

Demographic description of the schizophrenia sub-sample shows that 51% (n=30) of respondents were women, the majority were ages 40 – 49 years (n= 25, 44%), 85% (n=50) was white and the majority were never married (49%, n= 29). Findings for educational attainment showed the majority as highly educated with 49% (n=29) having a college or graduate degree.

For vocational status, 65% (n=38) were or had been employed full-time, the remainder employed part-time or temporarily. Sixty-one percent (n=35) held this position for more than two years, the remainder for less than two years. Using a Hollingshead (1975) ranking, the majority of occupations (37%, N=22) reported on referred to managers and minor professionals and secondarily to technicians and semi-professionals (27%,

n=16). One-third of the sample (36%, n= 21) had yearly income in the range of \$20,000 to \$29,000, the next largest group (21%, n=12) earned more than \$40,000 and the remainder earned less.

From a list of 8 possible attributions for their vocational success, respondents most frequently chose having learned how to manage their condition so that it does not much affect work performance (24%, n= 14), their own drive and will power (20%, n= 12), and sufficient modifications or accommodations on the job (14%, n= 8).

In order to probe correlates with vocational success as measured by income, numerous variables from the survey measuring demographics, mental health, job characteristics, supports used and other motivational factors were entered into a regression model. The table below shows a resulting model in which 25% of the variance in income is explained by having never received federal disability benefits (a proxy measure for disability severity) and greater reported stress on the job. On the univariate level we find variables correlated with higher incomes were having never received disability benefits, being married, higher stress on the job, ranking highly as important to job success the ability to manage one's psychiatric condition and one's own drive and will power. This analysis is consistent with earlier studies and further contributes illness management and motivation to the list of possible determinants for vocational success.

The survey demonstrates that at least some individuals with schizophrenia have succeeded in acquiring mid and upper level careers, although generalizeability is compromised by the sampling techniques. For now findings provide an empirical basis for raising expectations of the vocational potential for this group and for future explorations of determinants of vocational achievement.

Univariate and multivariate analyses for total yearly income during professional or managerial job

Yearly Income while Professional Job was Held^a:

	N	Statistic	sd	F value	df	p value
<u>Univariate analysis of independent variables</u>						
Received federal disability benefits				8.051	1, 54	0.006
Yes	37	$\bar{x} = 2.65$	1.21			
No	19	$\bar{x} = 3.79$	1.78			
Marital status				5.449	2, 55	0.007
Married	19	$\bar{x} = 3.84$	1.57			
Single	29	$\bar{x} = 2.69$	1.44			
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	10	$\bar{x} = 2.30$.67			
Attributes job success to ability to manage psychiatric condition				5.800	1, 56	0.019
Ranked highly important	24	$\bar{x} = 3.54$	1.44			
Ranked not important	34	$\bar{x} = 2.62$	1.44			
Level of stress on job				6.479	1, 55	0.014
Scale of 1=very , 5=very low	57	Beta= -4.74 s.e. = 1.86				
Attributes job success to own drive and willpower				4.809	1, 56	0.032
Ranked highly important	33	$\bar{x} = 3.36$	1.62			
Ranked not important	25	$\bar{x} = 2.52$	1.19			
<u>Multivariate analysis final model ($R^2 = .245$)</u>						
Received federal disability benefits				8.150	1	0.006
Level of stress				6.721	1	0.012
Age ^b				1.220	1	0.275

^a Yearly income grouped as follows: 1= under \$10,000 2=\$10,000-\$19,999 3=\$20,000-\$29,999 4=\$30,000-\$49,999 5=above \$50,000

^b This variable was kept in the model at the final step to adjust for the impact of policy change on length of hospitalization stays over recent decades.

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