

---

# FAMILY CAREGIVERS OF ELDERLY WITH MENTAL ILLNESS – WHO ARE THEY?

**Marie Persson**

univ lecturer, lic psychologist, Jönköping University



## Work in progress:

- a review about the situation for family care givers of elderly with mental illness (not dementia) and their need of support

Irène Ericsson, senior lecturer, Jönköping University

Elizabeth Hanson, professor, Linnaeus University and Swedish Family Care Competence Centre



---

# FAMILY CAREGIVERS OF ELDERLY WITH MENTAL ILLNESS – WHO ARE THEY?

**Marie Persson**

univ lecturer, lic psychologist

# MENTAL ILLNESS IN OLD AGE

- The prevalence of mental disorders is high among the elderly, 20 % in people without dementia 65 years and older
- Depression - 5-10 %
- Major depression - 1-5 %
- Anxiety disorders - 6-12 %

(Skoog, Can Jour of Psych, 2011)

# MENTAL ILLNESS IN OLD AGE...

...differs from mental illness in younger ages

- The symptoms are more complex and often combined with somatic disorders
- Physiological and psychological changes in old age reflect the mental health
- Pharmacological treatment needs to be more careful due to physiological changes in the aged body

# ORGANIZATION OF HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

- Health care and social services to elderly with mental illness - a complex situation
- Family caregivers regard well-functioning formal care as a good support for them too
- When the formal care work poorly, or the professionals don't coordinate the care of the aged person with mental illness, the burden is more massive for the family caregiver
- Family caregivers often serve as a coordinator.

# BENGT

- Husband to Greta 85, with symptoms of depression
- He had a cardio vascular disease and diabetes and was worried about his memory loss
- The investigation did not indicate any cognitive decline or dementia
- When interviewing Bengt about his life it appeared that his situation was filled with stress and concerns about his wife



# FLORA

- Sister to Fabian 72, with schizophrenia
- Fabian had recently moved to a nursing home and Flora had to explain to the staff who he was, how his earlier life had been and what kind of support he needed
- She also had the responsibility for his financial situation
- Flora had her own physical problem





# MARIA

- Daughter to Olle 76, who attempted to commit suicide when he no longer was able to handle his business, drive his car and at the same time witnessed his wife suffering from Alzheimer's disease
- Olle had no prior mental illness and the suicide attempt was a shock for Maria. Her father had always been someone to rely on



# ROBIN

- Grandson to Lisen 78, with post-traumatic stress disorder and sleeping disorder
- They were both exhausted and the first thing they needed help with was the sleeping problems
- Robin helped Lisen a lot, but he didn't get appropriate support as a caregiver





Ali, L., Ahlström, B. H., Krevers, B., Sjöström, N., Skärsäter, I. 2013. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 34:611–618.

Ewertzon, M., Cronqvist A., Lützén, K. & Andershed, B. 2012. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 33: 157-166

Flyckt, L., Löthman, A., Jörgensen, L., Rylander, A. & Koernig, T. 2013. *Int J of Soc Psych*, 59 (2), 137-146.

Kjellin, L. & Östman, M. 2005. *Nord J Psychiatry. Vol 59. No 1*, 7-11.

Gavois H, Paulsson G, Fridlund B. 2006. *Scand J Caring Sci*, 20, 102-109.

Nordström, M., Skärsäter, I., Björkman, T. & Wijk, H. 2009. *J of Psych and Mental Health Nursing*.16:738–748.

Stjernswärd, S. & Östman M. 2008. *Int Jour of Soc Psych. Vol 54(4)*: 358–369.

Stjernswärd, S, Östman, M, Löwgren, J 2012. *Scand J Caring Sci*; 2012; 26; 70–80.

Östman, M., Wallsten, T. & Kjellin, K. 2005. *Int J Soc Psychiatry* 2005 51: 291-301.

[marie.persson@ju.se](mailto:marie.persson@ju.se)