



Insane Consequences: How the Mental Health Industry Fails the Mentally Ill

D.J. Jaffe , E. Fuller Torrey (Foreword)

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This well-researched and highly critical examination of the state of our mental health system by the industry's most relentless critic presents a new and controversial explanation as to why--in spite of spending \$147 billion annually--140,000 seriously mentally ill are homeless, 390,000 are incarcerated, and even educated, tenacious, and caring people can't get treatment for their mentally ill loved ones. DJ Jaffe blames the mental health industry and the government for shunning the 10 million adults who are the most seriously mentally ill--mainly those who suffer from schizophrenia and severe bipolar disorder--and, instead, working to improve -mental wellness- in 43 million others, many of whom are barely symptomatic. Using industry and government documents, scientific journals, and anecdotes from his thirty years of advocacy, Jaffe documents the *insane consequences* of these industry-driven policies: psychiatric hospitals for the seriously ill are still being closed; involuntary commitment criteria are being narrowed to the point where laws now *require* violence rather than prevent it; the public is endangered; and the mentally ill and their families are forced to suffer.

Insane Consequences proposes smart, compassionate, affordable, and sweeping reforms designed to send the most seriously ill to the head of the line for services rather than to jails, shelters, prisons, and morgues. It lays out a road map to spend less on mental -health- and more on mental -illness---replace mission creep with mission control and return the mental health system to a focus on the most seriously ill. It is not money that is lacking; it's leadership.

This book is a must-read for anyone who works in the mental health industry or cares about the mentally ill, violence, homelessness, incarceration, or public policy.

Insane Consequences: How the Mental Health Industry Fails the Mentally Ill Details

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From Reader Review Insane Consequences: How the Mental Health Industry Fails the Mentally Ill for online ebook

Karen Prive says

Jaffe's tireless advocacy work for patients with serious mental illness and their families cannot be denied - he is a man who puts his beliefs into action. I agree with him on many points, and in particular about the shameful way our society has criminalized those with serious mental illness and effectively moved our most seriously ill patients from hospital settings to jails and prisons, and failing to protect these individuals from the consequences of their untreated illnesses. However I found this book to be poorly organized, and early in the book Jaffe would make his points using evidence he wouldn't explore until much further into the reading. I also found his extreme view that only those with schizophrenia or severe bipolar should be served by our mental health system to be too polarized. While I agree that we instead cater policy to the "worried well" I can also attest that the experience of mental illness lies on a spectrum. If those with somewhat more moderate illness were left untreated they would suffer similar consequences as those with the most severe illness. In spite of Jaffe's insistence that recovery is rare, by arguing that forced treatment limits the consequences of a person's serious mental illness he is acknowledging that treatment indeed works. He seemed to negate his own arguments.

John Hallowitz says

This is a must read for anyone concerned with services for those with mental illness. If you are a provider; an advocate; a policy maker; a relative, friend or other significant person in the life of someone with a mental illness you are negligent if you do not read this book. This is a clear headed, fact based assessment of the state of the system of care for those with a mental illness in this country today. It details what works, what doesn't, where money is being wisely spent and wisely misspent, what are the legal and institutional roadblocks to needed care, and provides a road map of where we must go if we hope to ever help those who are most disabled by mental illness disorders.

Marcela says

DJ Jaffe tends to have very polarizing views on how mental illness should be approached and often appoints himself as spokesperson for seriously mentally ill. I almost put this book down when he characterized people on disability as high functioning people who game the system so they don't have to work. He is dismissive of efforts to fight stigma saying that prejudice and discrimination should be fought by changing laws the way he says it is for African Americans and gays which made me think he didn't realize the extent to which prejudice has been experienced by any of these groups. He also dismisses peer support efforts though he sings the praises of clubhouses which seem similar in nature. I guess maybe this would be an extreme counterpoint to someone like Robert Whitaker but at this point I wouldn't appoint either to be spokesperson for mentally ill.

Benjamin says

This is a well documented book on the state of the mental health care industry in this country and how we got there. This book hits close to home, reading the anecdotes from those who have suffered from not being able to get care for a loved one who is severely mentally ill. One hopes that detailed picture provided in these pages, though sick, sad, and angering, will lead to change.

Jana Collins says

As the parent of an adult child with schizophrenia who is disabled by his illness, I found this book to be accurate and validating. The system is broken and even though my husband and I possess advanced degrees and are upper middle class, we have found it nearly impossible to navigate the system. Try finding a psychiatrist first of all. It takes months to get an appointment and most of them don't take insurance. \$300 per session out of pocket. Try getting the insurance you have to cover your child's meds-nope. Instead we are paying almost \$3k a month out of pocket as our savings and dreams of retirement fade. I guess they want him to end up back in the hospital or worse. And on and on.

This quote from the book sums it up well. "The family is the new mental institution. Aging parents try to provide case management, housing and treatment to psychotic and delusional loved ones without the information they need or the authority to enforce compliance. Trying to get treatment for an ill family member takes countless hours, scores of daily calls, callbacks, hours on hold, and visits to facilities, and success is not guaranteed."

Whether you have an ill family member or not, read this book if you want to see what we as family members are up against. Then, please get involved to help change the system. You never know when these illnesses might strike someone you love. It was certainly never on my radar that one of my children might be so terribly afflicted, threaten to kill himself and his dad and me. Heartbreaking grief every single day for the person he was before he became ill at age 19.

Erin says

This book is extremely thought provoking for anyone interested in improving the lives of people that suffer from serious mental illnesses or in learning more about how our mental health system is a blatant failure. DJ Jaffe raises important but harsh criticisms of many mainstream organizations working to improve mental health. Jaffe claims that a shifting focus towards wellness has led to the exclusion of the seriously mentally ill from federally funded and other advocacy orgs and treatment providers. Organizations like the ACLU argue that involuntary civil commitment laws must remain extremely strict. I am a firm believer in civil rights, but what do we do when supposed "respect" for someone's civil liberties now compromise that same person's civil liberties down the line? Our inability to commit those who need treatment against their will essentially guarantees they will end up incarcerated later and remain so LONGER than someone who is not ill. How does incarcerating someone for their illness equate to respecting their civil liberties?

I appreciate Jaffe's book because it is clearly well researched and backed by facts. It also includes recommendations for what should be changed rather than just criticism. However, his approach may be polarizing to some and I found his language a bit harsh at times especially with regard to a recent societal

push for wellness and stigma reduction. While my experience is anecdotal I certainly believe that stigma against those who suffer from serious mentally illnesses (including psychotic disorders) face stigma in many areas of their lives.

Rick says

Shortlisted and cherry picked info

First the author uses cherry picked info. He appears to be obviously biased as well. Recommendations do not take variables into account. He appears to use emotional language in place of solid information. I am not against all the ideas, but many do not have the critical thinking in place to be taken seriously.

Sara says

I am a social worker in a psychiatric hospital so my opinions on this may be biased.

Jaffe makes many clear and emotionally driven points about how messed up our mental health care system is. There were many eye opening moments for me. We can thank the deinstitutionalization movement for the current mess we are in. Once many of the state hospitals closed, the most seriously mentally ill had no place to go. Now, the majority of our sickest are stuck in jails or on the streets.

If you're not in the field or know how to navigate the mental health system, this book may be challenging. Additionally, every state has different laws about the treatment of our seriously mentally ill which may make Jaffe's points further confusing.

I could go on a further rant and discussion about what to do, but the bottom line is that if we want to save money and help the seriously mentally ill, we need to provide more supportive housing and affordable treatment to this population. Additionally, we need more psychiatrists and APRNs willing to work in the community with the sickest of the sick.

Natasha Tracy says

This is an amazing book. If you are a mental health advocate, you need to read it, now. It details what the mental health system in the United States **really** is like for those with serious mental illness. This book focuses on the 4% of people who are seriously ill with bipolar, schizophrenia and the like, and skips the issues of the "worried well". I consider myself an educated mental illness advocate and I learned so much. There are real-life stories here that you likely won't read about anywhere else. They may break your heart at times, but they are extremely important to read. The statistics are fascinating and the chapter on solutions is something everyone should read.

DJ Jaffe should be extremely proud of this work. It is unlike anything else and it needs to be read.

Pat Morgan says

This book describes, in detail, the failure of our government to address the needs of severely and persistently mentally ill people, why jails and prisons all across America have become de-facto, but totally inadequate and inappropriate mental health facilities, and what must be done to reverse this national nightmare. Well researched, it is an eye-opener and a call to action.

Douglas says

An excellent book if you want to get furiously angry at someone -- specifically, in this case, at the mental health industry and its supporters. DJ Jaffe's book is extensively documented and well noted, and would be difficult to argue against I suspect. It's a troubling work, as many of the efforts those in government agencies and in civil rights organizations work against the best interest of the seriously mentally ill individual in the name of civil rights. The results are tragic, not just for those individuals, but for those around them.

I highly recommend this book for anyone hoping to understand the real struggle we have in aiding those who suffer from serious mental illness and the various roadblocks put up by the very agencies supposedly raised up to support them. Jaffe is also careful to present solutions at the end, which leaves this work with a bit of hope at the end. If we can reorganize, restructure, and refocus on those that truly need help, then we can change things for the better.

As things stand at the end of the reading of this book, the morass remains. Hopefully many will read this, those in position to effect change and those who can lift up or influence the former. Even the average citizen can do well to understand the issues in this book and how to look for answers and help for those who need it.

Erin says

DJ Jaffe knows his stuff and is very passionate with good intentions but his agenda is an extreme one. He has done his research. He exposes much about agencies that are doing a disservice to the seriously mentally ill and although I agree we can do better as an industry this book is very emotionally driven and radical in it's approach. I also don't agree with some of his views on trauma.

Erin says

DJ Jaffe knows his stuff and is very passionate with good intentions but his agenda is an extreme one. He has done his research. He exposes much about agencies that are doing a disservice to the seriously mentally ill and although I agree we can do better as an industry this book is very emotionally driven and radical in it's approach. His recommendations for solutions are just to cut all programs completely that he doesn't agree with. Which makes it hard to take him seriously. I certainly agree SMI population needs more of a focus but not to the detriment of milder mental health. There's a need for services for both.
