

# Mental health

## Congressional wives press for increased research funding

**Associated Press**  
**WASHINGTON** — Her voice cracking with emotion, a congressman's wife emotionally recalled Wednesday the anguish she felt during her son's 15-year battle with mental illness.  
 "I used to ask myself what I had done wrong to cause him to act the way he did," Norma Lagomarsino, wife of Rep. Robert Lagomarsino, R-Calif., said as she occasionally dabbed her eyes with a handkerchief.  
 "It wasn't until later that I learned my son was suffering from schizophrenia, and that the illness was very, very real," she told the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee.  
 Mrs. Lagomarsino, 59, said she agreed to tell her story in hopes of educating more people about mental illness to eliminate the stigma attached to it.

Thanks to a combination of medication and psychotherapy, Mrs. Lagomarsino said her son, 34, has been able to get his life in order. She asked that he not be identified.  
 "He's a student at a university, enjoying his studies and college life."  
 "He has a girlfriend and tells me he has never been happier."  
 But she said the emotional and financial toll was high.  
 Only after her son was incarcerated at a state hospital for destroying property was he forced to confront his illness, she said.  
 Besides talking publicly, Mrs. Lagomarsino and other congressional wives have joined together in an informal group to press lawmakers for more money for mental health research.  
 "Once the awareness goes up, stigma goes down, research goes up and services go up," said Nancy Do-

menici, the wife of Sen. Pete V. Domenici, R-N.Mex.  
 Like the Lagomarsinos, Mrs. Domenici said one of her eight children had the symptoms of mental illness.  
 "It was really hard to find help and a lot of doctors are in a bind because diagnosing is very difficult," she added.  
 Last summer, six congressional wives wrote to the Senate and House appropriations committees asking them to increase research money for the National Institute of Mental Health.  
 Sen. Lowell Weicker, R-Conn., chairman of a Senate appropriations health subcommittee, said fellow panel member Domenici worked hard for more money.  
 Domenici "put his shoulders behind that wheel and I'm delighted," Weicker said.

The House has approved \$210 million for research at NIMH for fiscal year 1986, an increase of \$17 million over last year.  
 A Senate committee has boosted that figure to \$216 million, and the full Senate will consider the issue shortly.  
 Shervert Frazier, director of the mental health institute, said state and local officials must turn their attention to the growing number of mentally ill people who live on their own, without the support of family or trained professionals.  
 Figures from the Department of Health and Human Services said in 1979 there were an estimated 1.7 million to 2.4 million people suffering from mental illness.  
 About 900,000 were in institutionalized, and between 800,000 and 1.5 million were in the community.

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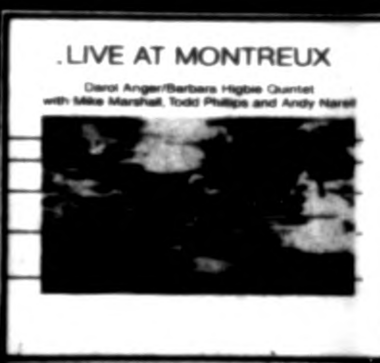


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