

Video title: Gord's journey with schizoaffective disorder

I first realized that something was wrong, that something was going wrong when I was 16 years old

Slide: One-third of emergency department visits for a mental illness or addiction are by people who have never been assessed and treated for these issues before by a physician.

When I was a teenager and when I was in high school and I started to withdraw from my friends and I started to get suspicious of people and I started to and I started to see lights coming from people's eyes – I didn't know it was called schizophrenia because we didn't have much education on it.

But I recognized there was a problem and I hoped I would get better and go onto university and that the problem would go away.

Slide: About two million Ontarians are affected by a wide variety of mental illnesses and addictions each year.

I would estimate in my life I've been hospitalized over 25 times, particularly before I found a medication that helped deal with the illness.

Some of the early hospitalizations could have been called what's called a 'revolving door' because I would feel so bad at home and the sense of well-being was so bad and so depressed and so anxious that I wanted something to change and the only route I knew of was the emergency department.

One time when I really fell through the cracks – I had been in the hospital and after two days they discharged me and gave me two bus tickets and they said "this is the way to the shelter downtown" and I took the two bus tickets and I went downtown and I was completely disorganized and I was thinking that the cars were going to come and follow me and I walked into a restaurant and they gave me a sandwich and they said "you should really try to get to your family."

So I took the bus ticket and I took the bus and I went up to my cousin and I went in their house and they gave me some shoes, because I hadn't been wearing shoes and they gave me a meal and my aunt said to her son "please take him in the car and take him back to the hospital because he needs to be in there."

Slide: This pattern continued until Gord found the right treatment and was able to begin his recovery

So if there had been a clinic where I could have walked in and they would have advised me on ways to change medication, higher support, without having to go to emergency that might have made the difference.

And really in terms of mental health treatment, it is a new era. We have a new emphasis on client driven, client centred care, newer medications, newer models of treatment, better hospitals, and I think overall – a stronger commitment from society to help people with mental illness. Because as I say it's not something that affects everybody else, it affects us.

So I think the commitment that our society has is going to mean a lot brighter picture for somebody in the future.