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My son has a brain disease, Schizophrenia. Schizophrenia should not be called terms such as "mental illness" and "behavioral health" because it's not much different from Dementia or Alzheimers in a lot of cases. My son is 38 and has been suffering from Schizophrenia for 20 years. Mental illness is stigmatizing and he doesn't want to have that label and refuses treatment. I am his legal guardian, but I can't make him see a doctor, a dentist, a psychiatrist, or take medication, get a haircut, or cut his nails, or change his clothes. People with Schizophrenia really cannot care for themselves.

If someone's parent has Dementia or Alzheimers, they allow family and doctors to do what is best for them, put them in supported housing, and make sure they have medication. If someone has a brain disease (Schizophrenia), they are left to take care of themselves and they don't realize they have a brain disease and don't know they need medication. My son is currently unmedicated and I cannot make him see a doctor or take medication. I am at a loss how to get him help. He's not a danger to anyone. He was always the victim and being robbed in the past of his property until I spent my retirement 401k and bought a condo for him out of city limits. Before that, I had to move him from apartment to apartment 13 times! I've lost so much money in security deposits, moving fees, changing Cablevision to a new location, etc. I am 67 years old and I cannot retire. I had to take my 401k and buy a condo for my son to live in. Landlords don't want people with Schizophrenia because they talk to themselves, have delusional thinking, are incoherent, break the rules, and don't understand the consequences at all. I had to choose to be able to retire or have my son in a condo where he won't be homeless when I'm gone. He really can't take care of himself. I have to hire someone to clean, and I have to make sure he eats every day. He's progressively getting worse as he gets older and doesn't make any sense when he tries to carry on a conversation.

I was with him recently trying to get him to his COVID vaccination appointment I made for him. I had to trick him to get there and give him \$50 and that's another story! I thought I was going to have a breakdown. A nurse finally came outside but said she cannot give the injection if he doesn't want it. He said "No", then she asked again and he said "well maybe, ok" because he can't make any decisions himself. He gets so confused. I finally said, "He said ok, please don't ask again and just give it to him." He finally got the J&J vaccine but I'm still not over the ordeal of getting there yesterday.

Anyway, people with schizophrenia should be considered a MEDICAL problem because it's a BRAIN DISEASE, and not merely in a category such as depression and labeled a mental illness and behavioral health. The brain is an organ that is broken, just like when the heart or another internal organ has a problem. Families need to be able to get them treatment and be able to speak for them since they don't understand they have a brain disease and refuse treatment. Something needs to change - please help us to help our adult children with Schizophrenia. We need someone to go to their houses whether they want them there or not, and we need authority to authorize an injection of Invega or some medication so they can function. Otherwise, they end up in jail or prison due to a symptom of their brain disease. It's a medical issue and not a behavioral issue. Would you put your parent with Dementia in jail for being caught sleeping in an old apartment they used to live in? People with schizophrenia go to jail for that. Please help our families get treatment for our adult children who have this terrible brain disease. They should not be allowed to make their own decision to refuse treatment when they have anosognosia. (Anosognosia is a condition in which a person with a disability is cognitively unaware of having it due to an underlying physical condition. Anosognosia results from physiological damage to brain structures, typically to the parietal lobe or a diffuse lesion on the front-temporal-parietal area in the right hemisphere, and is thus a neuropsychiatric disorder.)

Please help us by making this brain disease a medical issue and not a mental health issue. Let the families help them to get treatment and take control when they can't and won't do it for themselves.

I'm not a fantastic writer, but I feel I needed to let you all know what happens in our families and the heartbreak we feel every single day. I hope I was able to do that. Please help us to get our sick adult children treatment and help in their homes when they don't know they need it.