

## **WEEK 14 – NUMBERS REDUX**

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We have talked several times about the importance of numbers. Numbers are rhetorical devices. Numbers support implementation, drive policy to terminate and determine success of treatment. Numbers are important. If you can't be counted, you simply don't exist. A state, as in a country, has no obligation to you.

Looking over the global data presented above, we can say with certainty the following conclusions. Data are difficult to collect, and despite efforts to systematize diagnosis, sociocultural differences may complicate the comparability of internationally collected metrics. Lack of standardized data collection instruments, such as a unique patient tracking number, and different care protocols make it difficult to maintain continuity of care, much less accurate data on trajectory of care or prevalence and incidence.

Major gaps in data in adolescence pose one of the biggest challenges for behavioral health policy and services. Not only are data on early adolescents aged 10 to 14 scarce, data on preadolescents/middle childhood, ages 5 to 9, is practically unknown. Much of this has to do with the fact that fewer international indicators are disaggregated for children aged 5 to 9 than for early childhood or adolescence. Further, there are few internationally agreed-upon and collected indicators on adolescent mental health, disability, level of disability, and quality of life.

Worse for many developing countries, these data are simply not collected. Disaggregation of data and causal analyses are critical to gain a better understanding of children and adolescents with behavioral health disorders, as well as the effects of the social determinants of health in this population, the need of services, level of disability, and outcomes. Internationally accepted indicators disaggregated by age, disability, gender, ethnicity, caste, and religion are essential to provide for culturally and societally appropriate programs and policies. One of the ongoing issues is a lack of numbers to address care and behavioral health services.