


The Center for Mental Health Services Research
 Washington University in St. Louis
 GEORGE WARREN BROWN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK


Use of Psychotropic Medications During the Transition Out of Foster Care

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Background


Youth in the foster care system use psychotropic medications at rates higher than other youth.

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Background: Use of Meds


Authors and Service Type	Population	Past year use	Current use
Bartlett, 2003	Children and youth ages 6-21 in Illinois' foster care system		29%
dos Reis et al., 2001	Children and youth ages 6-19 in the foster care system of a Mid-Atlantic state	41%	
McMillen et al., 2004	17 year old youth in Missouri's foster care system		37%
Raghavan et al., 2005	National sample of children ages 2-16 in foster care system who had entered the child welfare system in prior year		18%
Raghavan et al., 2005	National sample of children ages 2-16 who had entered the child welfare system in prior year and living with parents.		13%
Zima et al., 1999	Ages 6-12 in Los Angeles County foster care system	13%	

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Background


- But, we don't know if that is good or bad.
- And, we don't know what happens to medication use as children or young adults leave the foster care system.

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Structural Barriers to Continued Medication Use


- Lose foster care case manager who may arrange services.
- Lose a care provider (RTC, foster parent) who may arrange services.
- Lose Medicaid eligibility.
- Face tighter qualifying criteria in adult systems of care.

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Research Questions

- How many older youth who are psychotropic medication users continue to use medications after they leave the foster care system?
- What predicts continued psychotropic medication use?
- When psychotropic medication use stops, what are the reasons?

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Study Specifics

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Research Sample

- 404 youth enrolled in short longitudinal study at age 17 from 8 counties in Missouri who were then in the custody of the Missouri Children’s Division
- 90% of those eligible
- 56% female 56% youth of color

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Research Methods

- Youth interviewed 9 times from age 17 to age 19.
- Youth interviewed with the aid of a history calendar
- 325 youth remained in study at age 19 (80%)

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Those not retained

Reason	N	%
Inability to locate	63	16
Dropped Out	7	2
Incarcerated	7	2
Overseas military service	2	< 1 %

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Measurement

- Medication module of the Service Assessment for Children and Adolescents (Horwitz et al., 2001; Stiffman et al, 2000)
- Constructed two medication continuity measures:
 - a. using at 17 and using at 19
 - b. use during the transition out of care (med use in each of the first two months after leaving the foster care system and four of the next six months).

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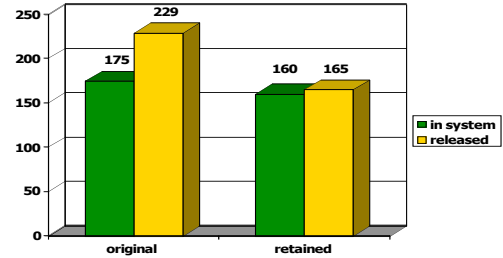
Study Results

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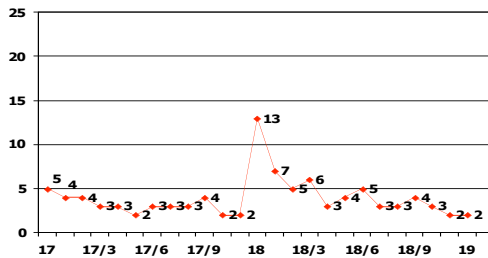
Foster Care System Status, Age 19

- Of the 404 young participants, 254 (63%) had left the foster care system by age 19.
- Of the 325 retained in the study at age 19, 177 (54% had left the foster care system).

Foster Care System Status, Age 19



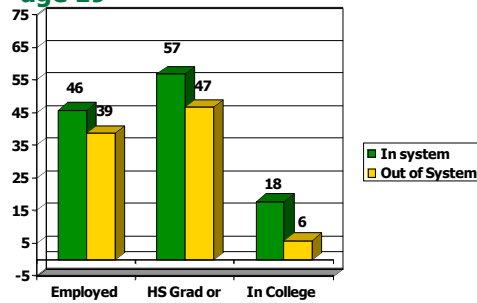
Of youth released, what percentage left when? N=234



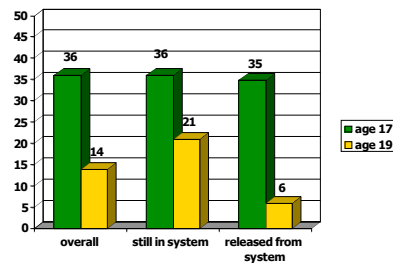
Retention analyses

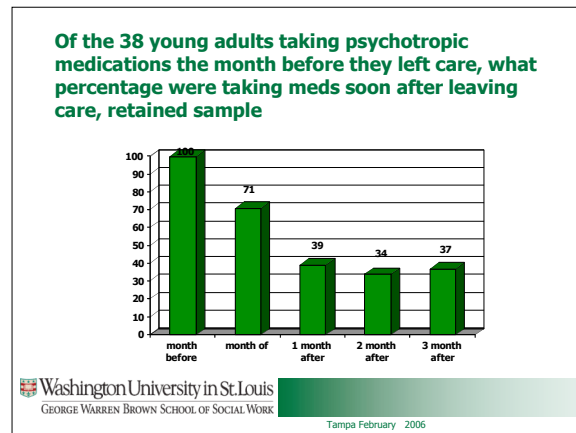
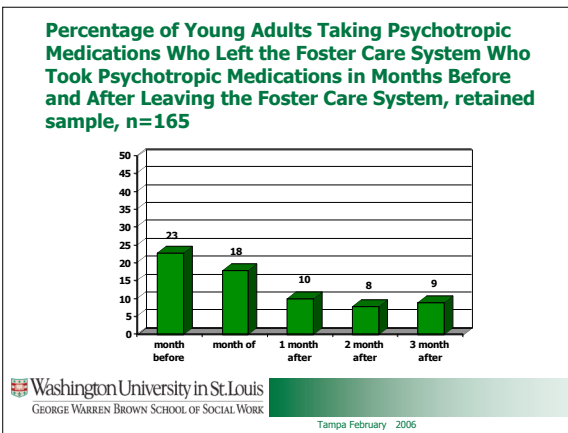
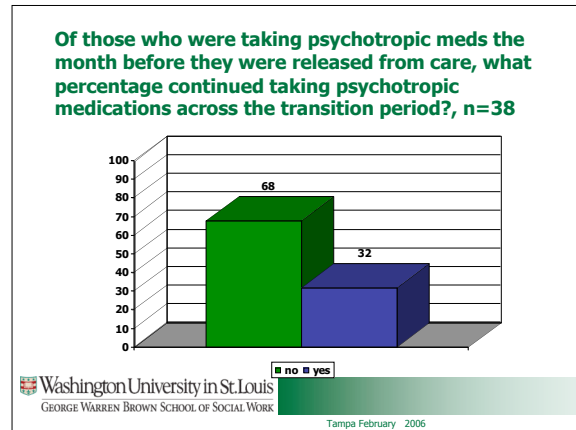
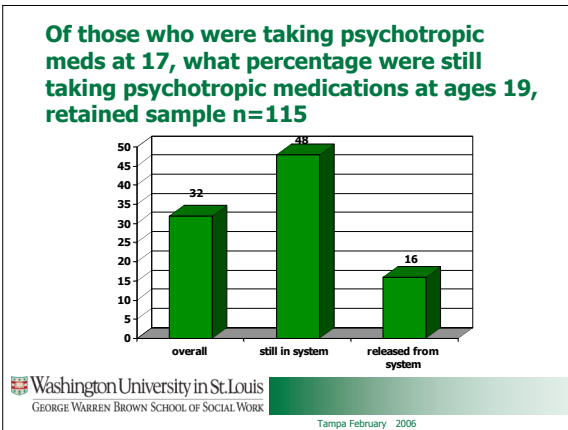
	Odds Ratio	P
Male gender	.34	<.0001
Past year PTSD	.36	.025
Released custody by 19	.26	<.0001
Hx detention	.52	.016

Percentage with Certain Outcomes, age 19



Percentage of Young Adults Taking Psychotropic Medications at ages 17 and 19, retained sample n=325

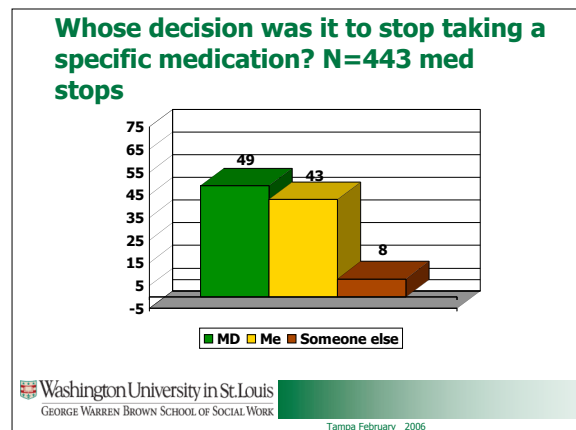


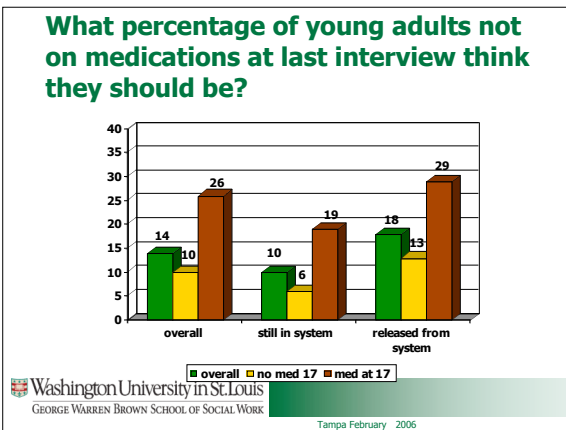
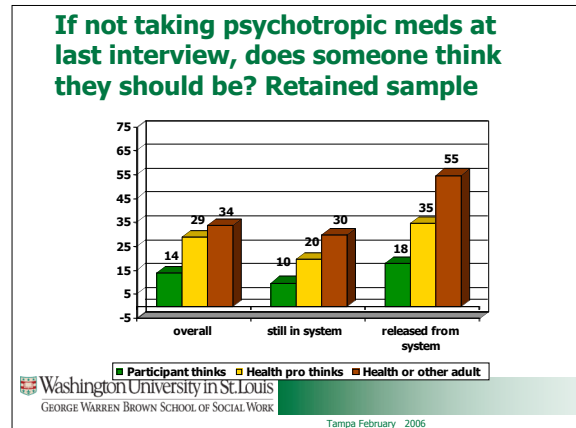
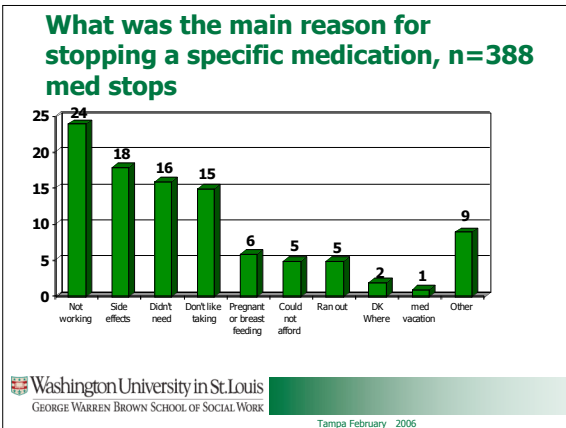


What predicts continued medication use from age 17 to age 19? N=115

- Leaving the foster care system
OR=.08, p <.0001
- Being a youth of color
OR=.32, p=.037

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If youth or someone else thinks should be on meds, what is the primary reason given for not being on meds? [For youth still in the foster care system, n=27]

Reason	%
No longer have those problems	26
Meds don't help	22
My family doesn't me to	15
Can't afford	4
Side effects	4
Other	26

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If youth or someone else thinks should be on meds, what is the primary reason given for not being on meds? [youth who left the foster care system, n=57]

Reason	%
My family doesn't want me to	25
Can't afford	19
Meds don't help	19
No longer have those problems	16
Hassle to get meds	12
Side effects	4
Pregnant or Breast feeding	4
Other	4

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Unmet need due to cost?

This study identified only 11 young adults (7% of those who had left custody) who said that they needed to be taking psychotropic medications but the primary reason they were not was because they could not afford it.

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The Story

- Some young adults in this foster care system stopped taking psychotropic medications before they left the foster care system.
- When youth left the system, the drop off in medication use occurred quickly.
- There was some unmet need for psychotropic medications among those who have left the foster care system.
- Reasons other than cost/access were primarily given for not taking psychotropic medications than payment reasons.
- Family is an important factor in determining whether young people continue to take psychotropic medication as they leave the foster care system.

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Policy Implications

- Expand Medicaid coverage for youth leaving the foster care system.

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Practice Implications

- Careful clinical work, psychoeducation to avoid unintended consequences of unmonitored stopping of medications.
- Careful consideration of medication prescriptions for youth expected to leave the foster care system.
- Involve family in psychiatric treatment planning before youth leave foster care.

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