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## THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC REALITIES OF MENTAL HEALTH IN IRELAND

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**Introduction:** Mental Health entails significant economic costs, not only the provision of health services but also lost economic output. Mental Health has been estimated to cost Ireland up to €3 billion annually. Social determinants are a major contributory factor to mental health problems and inequity.

**Objectives:** To illustrate economic cost of mental health in Ireland, importance of social determinants in mental health inequity and provide guidelines on how to improve the overall level of mental health.

**Aim:** Examine economic cost of mental health in Ireland and discuss how negative social determinants might be tackled to reduce mental health inequities.

**Methodology:** Review hardcopy and internet reports and studies since 2000 on Irish mental health policy, the economic costs and social determinants of mental health, the obstacles to reducing health inequities and what should be prioritised to achieve good mental health in Ireland.

**Results:** Mental Health problems incur a significant cost. Furthermore, mental health problems occur more frequently amongst those groups with negative social determinants. These health inequities need to be tackled to reduce the overall level of mental health illness.

**Conclusions:** Given current global economic difficulties it is more important than ever to reduce economic costs. Mental health is one such significant cost. Negative social determinants lead to mental health inequities and therefore greater economic costs in terms of health care and lost economic productivity. They must be tackled by an holistic approach, one which not only involves the health sector but also other relevant social and economic sectors.