The History of Mental Illness
Colonial America

- Society believed insanity was caused by a full moon at the time of a baby’s birth.
- These “lunatics”- (lunar) were thought to be possessed by the devil.
- Treatments: ice baths, bloodletting.
Colonial Treatment

- Barbaric
- Demon-possessed
- Senseless animals
- “It was believed that patients chose to behave irrationally, and doctors tried to help them adopt a more normal manner.”
Care??

- Family
- Parish Church
- Those without family-
  - placed in prisons- chained to walls, unclothed
  - poorhouses
1770s

- First hospitals
- 1773- Williamsburg, Virginia
- Designed to keep those with mental illness away from society- not treat them.
17th-18th Centuries
Dorothea Dix

- Schoolteacher
- Discovered many people with mental illness were in jails.
- Crusaded for the establishment or enlargement of 32 mental hospitals, & transfer of those with mental illness from almshouses and jails.
The Civil War

- Many servicemen - postwar trauma
- State hospitals and asylums overcrowded
- Restraints, shock therapy, opium
Soldier’s Heart - or “PTSD”
Post Civil War

- Asylums – now underfunded – overcrowded
- Quality of care deteriorates
- Newspapers expose inhumane conditions
1930s- The Lobotomy Mental Health’s Darkest Hour

- Surgically separated the neural passages from the back of the brain
- Over 20,000 performed
- Abuse and neglect soared
Asylums Renamed Mental Hospitals

- Psychiatric units opened in general hospitals
- Treatments ineffective
- Hospitals provided humane custodial care at best
  - At worst- neglect or abuse
- Great Depression=overcrowding
1949- Lithium

- New hope
1954

- Antipsychotic drugs introduced
- Thorazine- improves hallucinations and delusions
- Other medications now become available
1956

- Congress allocates $12 million for psychopharmacology
- Number of consumers decline in mental institutions
1961 - Action for Mental Health

- Report to Congress based on 5 years of research
  - Task: arrive at a national program to meet the needs of those with mental illness
  - Recommends improved research, training and treatment in the field of mental health.
  - Attempts to answer:
    - “Why has care of the mentally ill lagged?”
    - “How can we catch up?”
1960s

- Community health movement
  - Outpatient services
  - More research
  - Less state mental hospitals
  - More general hospitals with psychiatric wings
  - More community health centers
1980s

- President Jimmy Carter
- Mental Health Systems Act
  - Grant program
  - Involves consumer input
  - Offers education and support
  - Strengthens the links between
    - Federal and state services
1981-1985

- Carter’s work halted
- Mental Health Systems Act repealed
- Funding drops
Behavioral Health Managed Care

- 1988
- States now “carved out” mental care from physical care
- Purpose: increase efficiency
- Results: led to erosion of health care
1990s- The Decade of the Brain

- President George Bush designates the 1990s as the *Decade of the Brain*: "to enhance public awareness of the benefits to be derived from brain research" through "appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities."
1994

- Behavioral Brain Imaging
  - Helps scientists learn more about the development of major mental illnesses.