



## Michael Corbin - Biography

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Four years ago, Michael Corbin carved his signature into the wall of his jail cell. Corbin was sitting in a Nashville jail for a DUI as a result of a blackout side effect due to drugs taken to alleviate the symptoms of a mental illness. Today, Corbin is sitting in an office spearheading everyminute.org, a new national grassroots campaign to transform the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental disorders through publicly funded research. And now far removed from the dank walls of prison, his signature is on display in a far different way.

Sitting in his 12x9 foot jail cell, Corbin personally understood the need of a more objective way to diagnose and treat mental disorders instead of the current trial and error method. "Consider how more predictive and personalized treatments could improve the safety and effectiveness of medications," says Corbin. "The same medication can help one patient and be ineffective for, or toxic to, another. With the emergence of a field of research called pharmacogenomics, we will increasingly know which patients will likely benefit from treatment and which will not benefit, or worse, be harmed. We need to let people know of the hope that research could provide if America prioritizes and properly funds it."

After being released from jail 9 months after his arrest, Corbin set out with the resolve to form a speakers bureau that could help others in similar situations work through the recovery process. He began networking in the mental health care field, eventually getting in contact with NIMH's (National Institute for Mental Health) Director, Dr. Thomas Insel. Insel preaches that research will benefit the individual by providing prediction, preemption and personalization of treatments. Corbin adopted the hope and promise that research could one day give him a definitive answer about his disorder and how to treat it. "Today, we intervene late, when the patient exhibits symptoms of mental illness. Research is changing this approach, so that we may intervene much earlier in the natural cycle of diseases, years before they strike their victims. We must now develop a much more preemptive approach that manages disease over its entire life cycle, from identifying an individual's susceptibility to a disease, to prevention, early diagnosis, reduction of complications, and smarter therapies."

Funded by the Jene and Curtis Graves Foundation, Corbin began work on the everyminute.org campaign. everyminute.org created a website mobilizing mental health advocates into a lobbying power in support of innovative research. "We are a beacon of hope for mental health similar to what the Susan G. Komen or the ONE campaign are doing in their respective fields. We are the only youthful, grassroots campaign for mental health solely focused on prevention and the possibility of finding a cure through accelerating the public funding of research. everyminute.org exists because one out of four Americans affected do not yet have a unified voice to to be fairly represented when the government makes appropriations."



"Today, we intervene late, when the patient exhibits symptoms of mental illness. Imagine all the years of lost life. Broken relationships. I knew I wasn't fit to be a father without proper treatment, so I signed away all rights to my baby girl after divorcing my wife." Corbin's personal reasons for his mission are evident, but his efforts could alleviate an even bigger societal and economic dilemma. According to the NIMH, as many as 57 million Americans meet criteria for some mental disorder, with roughly 12 million reporting symptoms so severe as to cause significant disability and interference with everyday living. Every minute a suicide is attempted in the United States. More than 90% of suicide victims have a mental or substance abuse disorder. And while the human cost is enormous, the economic cost is also great. The economic costs of mental disorders are estimated at over \$190 billion, with most due to the loss of economic productivity as a result of the illnesses. Studies show that these costs are on a trajectory to increase, but studies also show that the burden can be alleviated with proper prevention and investment. According to "The Economics of Health and Medical Care," by P Jacobs, "The cost-benefit ratios for early treatment and prevention programs range from 1:2 to 1:10, meaning that a \$1 investment yields a \$2 to \$10 savings." Creating better treatments and being able to predict who is at risk will reduce the enormous burden of mental illness on society.

It is the best of times and the worst of times for many scientists seeking funding. According to Dr. Insel, "The opportunities to make scientific discoveries have never been better." However, recent funding to the NIMH has been stagnant with the slight increases failing to cover the cost of medical inflation. "We have been especially concerned that the "worst of times" scenario could result in a loss of young investigators and a tendency to avoid high-risk research at the very time when new scientists and innovation can have the greatest impact," says Insel. "With each additional year that the nation's support of science falls behind inflation, we are losing ground in our support of discoveries that will reduce the burden of mental illness, addiction, and alcohol dependence."

everyminute.org is not only a platform for advocacy, but an indirect provider to services and an educational campaign bursting into the public eye to eradicate stigma. everyminute.org directs the public to information for support and services at the local level, thereby building the capacity of partnering support and treatment organizations. After Americans find the necessary support, everyminute.org empowers them by providing a platform to give them fair representation in Washington, DC. "Mental illness can be hereditary, so true recovery exists only when our children do not have to even begin the recovery process," says Corbin. Advocates that seek a transformation in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental health problems can physically sign their name to an Online Declaration on the website. Hundreds of signatures are currently on display on the Online Declaration wall, visibly declaring the need and benefit of accelerated research.

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Just four years removed from the confining, inscripted walls of prison, Corbin now fights to free himself and 57 million others from the confining restrictions of mental illness. "As mental health consumers, we have been segregated for far too long. Now is the time to stand up, unite and demand a transformation in the way we deal with mental disorders," says Corbin as he pulls up everyminute.org revealing his signature on the Online Declaration wall "and it all starts with a signature."