

Mind and body

North Shore Schizophrenia Society host talk on metabolic syndrome.

REBECCA ALDOUS

STAFF REPORTER

Margaret Dean rummages through a drawer full of files.

"It was the weight gain that probably caused the diabetes [type two]," she said while sorting through papers. "[The weight gain] is one of the side effects of the medication."

Now 40 years old, Dean's son Michael was diagnosed with schizophrenia 16 years ago. He lives in a group home on the North Shore and Dean and her daughter Susie have dedicated much of their time to the North Shore Schizophrenia Society and raising awareness about mental health.

There are so many issues Michael faces and challenges surrounding the mental disorder that the public and doctors should be more aware of, Dean said.

She's been tracking and recording all of them since Michael's diagnosis. While placing down a folder full of her own entries, Michael's medication requirements and mental health article clippings, it's easy to see how one's mental health requirements can overshadow their physical health, she said. But that's something Dean and Fraser Health doctor Jane Dumontet are trying to change.

Metabolic syndrome risk factors – abdominal obesity, high blood pressure, cholesterol abnor-



Margaret Dean holds a photo of her son Michael, who was diagnosed with schizophrenia when he was 24 years old.

Rebecca Aldous photo

malities, insulin resistance – are a common problem for people with severe mental illness, Dumontet said. Weight gain often accompanies the use of anti-psychotic medications, she noted.

"Some of the newer medications can be a problem, even more than the older medications," Dumontet said.

A high percentage of mental health patients smoke, she said, adding studies indicate it's more difficult for these individuals to quit than a person without mental health challenges.

Dumontet, who works as a clinical pharmacist at the Cottonwood and Connolly Lodges at Riverview, will be

giving a lecture on metabolic syndrome and its relation to mental illness on Wednesday, Nov. 25. The North Shore Schizophrenia Society's public education event takes place at Lions Gate Hospital's auditorium at 7:30 p.m. The free talk is part of the society's long-running lecture series on mental health and related subjects.

For more information call 604-926-0856 or visit www.northshoreschizophrenia.org.

raldous@northshoreoutlook.com