



North
Shore
Schizophrenia
Society

The Notepad

The NSSS Newsletter

PUBLIC EDUCATION EVENING

The B.C. Mental Health Act *Separating Fact From Fiction*

Speaker:

John E. Gray, PhD

Lead Author

Canadian Mental Health Law and Policy

Date: Wednesday, November 26, 2008

**Location: Lions Gate Hospital
Auditorium
13th Street entrance**

Time: 7:30 p.m. . . . sharp

Family Support Centre North Shore Schizophrenia Society

#205 - 1865 Marine Drive, West Vancouver, BC, V7V 1J7
Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday, or by appointment.

Tel/Fax 604-926-0856

www.northshoreschizophrenia.org
email: info@northshoreschizophrenia.org

The North Shore Schizophrenia Society is a
CRA Registered Charity: BN 89422 6935 RR0001

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Volunteers were on hand to talk about serious mental illness and answer questions from the public at a recent exhibit at the WV Library. See page 4.

Support Groups

Come share your questions, concerns, and experiences with members of the North Shore Schizophrenia Society. Support Group meetings are held each month at the Family Support Centre and in Squamish, for family members and close friends of those afflicted with any serious mental illness.

Please call 604-926-0856 for more information, upcoming dates, or to register.

Tips on Giving

*As the Tax Year
Comes to a Close*

NSSS support and advocacy work never ends. There's always much more that needs doing than we can handle. The ways of helping out financially are many too, however, and every year our members and other donors rise to the occasion.

Many people make a special contribution as the year comes to a close, to take advantage of the tax credit in the financial year. If you have an annual charitable donations budget and there's still something available for the 2008 tax year, please keep the North Shore Schizophrenia Society and our Family Support Centre in mind.

Your donations remain a key element in making our work possible.

**I would like to help the
NORTH SHORE
SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY**
205 - 1865 Marine Drive
West Vancouver, BC V7V 1J7

- with a donation to help keep the Family Support Centre operating
 Cheque enclosed
- I prefer to donate by monthly direct deposit
\$20__ \$30__ \$50__ Other __
- by making a contribution to the NSSS endowment fund, a gift that goes on forever
- by making a bequest to the North Shore Schizophrenia Society in my will;
 I would like some suggestions for appropriate wording

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Tel: _____

Email: _____

In Memoriam Mien van Heek

Mien and her husband Pem, who predeceased her in 2002, came in to the Family Support Centre for information, then joined our society when their twin grandsons both became ill with schizophrenia.

A member who knew them before that, through a shared interest in gardening, recounts that the advent of a shared sorrow only deepened their friendship. While she found hours of solace and delight in their company and in their wonderful cottage garden in the years when her own son's illness was severe and unrelenting, she could now offer very personal "sharing and caring" to help them understand and support their loved ones.

Heartfelt condolences to all the family.

Basil H. (Dave) Davies

Dave and his wife May (deceased 2005) were members of our North Shore society for many years, faithfully demonstrating their support of our endeavours with contributions and by keeping their membership up. We take it as a compliment that Dave left us as "a member in good standing."

We offer sincere condolences to the Davies family, and thank them for requesting again, as they did for May, that donations in memory of Dave be sent to the North Shore Schizophrenia Society.

New feature in *The Notepad*

The Advocacy Bulletin covers issues we are involved with and developments in policy and other matters. This is the first instalment in a series we hope to include in all future issues of *The Notepad*.

While we have been involved in many cases, issues, and other matters since the opening of the Family Support Centre in 1995, we haven't always reported on them in the newsletter due to space limitations. Now, with two pages dedicated to advocacy matters, that won't be a problem.

Recent Developments in Schizophrenia Research

Polypharmacy, or the use of two anti-psychotics in order to enhance recovery, doesn't necessarily work, according to Dr. Bill Honer, Jack Bell Chair in Schizophrenia Research at UBC. Honer, the featured speaker at our regular lecture series at Lions Gate Hospital in September, was discussing the results of a London, UK double-blind study on the subject.

Those in the study taking a placebo (an inactive substance) improved as much as those taking a second anti-psychotic. An added anti-psychotic, moreover – polypharmacy, in the jargon – increased side effects and, with that, increased the use of anti-side-effect medication. Thinking and cognitive function were, in fact, a bit better in those without the “polypharmacy overload.”

The biggest drawback of the polypharmacy approach, Honer commented, was the delay in using clozapine. The treatment protocol is to try two anti-psychotic medications before resorting to clozapine. Clozapine is a second-line medication because it requires a regular blood test to protect against the possible loss of white blood cells. However, instead of moving to clozapine quickly when two trials of first-line anti-psychotics didn't work, psychiatrists were trying out combinations. The average time for moving to clozapine for patients in the study was five years because of polypharmacy experimentation.

Honer also reported on a study on exercise. Results showed exercise produced a 15% increase in the size of a part of the brain called the hippocampus in both schizophrenics and those without the illness, while a control group of schizophrenics who played table football rather than doing the exercises showed no change. Illness symptoms didn't change much with the exercise, with only marginal improvement recorded. Nevertheless the study, in indicating that losses in the size of the hippocampus could be reversed and confirming that the brain had a certain plasticity, suggested possible new ways of going forward.

Dr. Honer also discussed experimental work being done in schizophrenia with anti-viral treatment.

The North Shore Schizophrenia Society gratefully acknowledges the support of the Province of British Columbia, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, City and District of North Vancouver, District of West Vancouver, the West Vancouver Community Foundation, Lynn Valley Lions, Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie 2638, Citizens Bank, Starbucks Coffee Co., and our many other generous donors.

NSSS Around the World

It's amazing how far and wide information can travel using the Internet. Knowing that many people look for answers online before picking up a brochure or a telephone, we made sure that information families need when serious mental illness affects someone they care about is easily accessible through our website. For anyone who hasn't visited www.northshoreschizophrenia.org, the site doesn't have fancy pop-up menus, Flash videos or special effects. It has information, and a lot of it.

People in crisis shouldn't need a map to search through confusing menus to find what they need. Everything is accessible from our Home page. Direct links to information on schizophrenia and other mental illnesses are highlighted for those learning about them for the first time. The side menu links visitors to detailed information on programs and services, related issues and case histories, legal information such as Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy and the Mental Health Act, back issues of *The Notepad* newsletter, events, recommended books and videos, and helpful websites from other organizations. Our Home page also has a calendar of events for the coming year and brief articles on the latest news. Many of the materials available at the Family Support Centre are also available for download, including many brochures, information sheets and booklets.

People from all over the world visit our website for information – more than 50 different countries since the beginning of 2008. Algeria, Malaysia, Lithuania, Greece and Argentina are just a few of the countries we've seen on the list. Since the beginning of the year, over 4,300 unique visitors have viewed our website (this doesn't include search engines or other automated systems), with nearly 17,000 page views and over 83,000 hits. Not bad for a “little” local organization.

The North Shore Schizophrenia Society is an incorporated society and registered charity, BN 89422 6935 RR0001. Tax receipts will be issued for all donations. To help the NSSS, send contributions to: 205-1865 Marine Dr., West Vancouver B.C. V7V 1J7 For more information on programs and services, see our website: www.northshoreschizophrenia.org or call the Family Support Centre at 604-926-0856.

Don't Miss the Christmas Banquet

→ **NEW LOCATION** ←

The 2008 North Shore Schizophrenia Society Christmas Banquet will be Saturday, December 6 at **St. David's United Church, 1525 Taylor Way** (at the entrance to Highway 1).

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and dinner will be served at 6:00.

As always, Santa will be joining the fun with gifts and merriment for all (we sent him a change of address form so he wouldn't get lost). And the evening wouldn't be complete without the West Vancouver Adult Pops Band, who will perform a variety of holiday favourites.

If you are planning to attend, please call the Family Support Centre at 604-926-0856 to reserve your seat. We look forward to seeing both new and familiar faces at this festive celebration!



Educating the Public: Mental Illness Awareness Week 2008



Any time is a good time to talk to members of the public about serious mental illness. But during Mental Illness Awareness Week, October 5-11, we join other organizations throughout Canada putting on events and exhibits to educate the public.

Our exhibit this year was at the West Vancouver Library on Saturday, October 11. Members were on hand to answer questions, distribute materials and share information with interested members of the public, many of whom stopped by to learn more.

Thanks to all the volunteers who made this day possible. And thanks to the library staff who helped select titles from their extensive collection.

Family-to-Family Spring Session Open for Registration

With demand for the Family-to-Family education course continuing to grow, we will be offering another session starting January 20. Both the fall and spring sessions in recent years have run at full capacity, often with a waiting list.

As so many of our members know, this course is more than an education in serious mental illness, it has a tremendous, positive impact on everyone who takes it.

The curriculum covers a lot of territory, including symptoms, medications, basics about the brain, problem solving, empathy, communication skills, self-care and more.

Family-to-Family runs for twelve weeks on Tuesday evenings from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. at the Family Support Centre.

For residents of the Sea-to-Sky Corridor, the course will be offered in Squamish if there are enough people interested. The course is most effective with a group of 15 participants—small enough for personal connection and large enough for a variety of experiences to be shared.

Anyone interested in taking the course should contact Marguerite at 604-926-0856.