



Stellenbosch University  
Department Psychiatry  
PO Box 19063  
Tygerberg

Phone: 021-938-9229  
Fax: 021-931-4172  
Email: mhic@sun.ac.za

## MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION CENTRE OF SOUTH AFRICA

### WELCOME NOTE

Welcome to the second volume of this year's Mental Health Information Centre's newsletter, in which you will be able to read about our activities of the past months.

### EXHIBITIONS ON MENTAL HEALTH

The Mental Health Information Centre focuses on psycho-education, creating awareness about psychiatric disorders and combating stigma. An important way of achieving our goals is to participate in various exhibits. During the past several months the MHIC has informed the public (lay people and professionals) about mental health at a number of forums.

#### *CINP REGIONAL MEETING 2005*

The Mental Health Information Centre had a small exhibition stall at the Cape Town International Convention Centre during the CINP congress (18- 22 April 2005), and obtained the attention of the attending international and local participants.

#### *CAPE TECHNIKON WELLNESS WEEK*

As in previous years, the MHIC manned an exhibition table at the Cape Technikon Wellness Week 19-21 April. Students and teachers were welcome to take some of our brochures and enquire about mental health/ illness.



*Exhibition stall at the Cape Technikon Wellness Week*

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## EXHIBITIONS ON MENTAL HEALTH

### *Wellness Day Department of Agriculture.*

On July 6<sup>th</sup> the MHIC attended a wellness programme to promote holistic wellness hosted by the Department of Agriculture: Western Cape in Elsenburg, Muldervlei. The aim of this health promotion was to make Department of Agriculture staff and farmers from the area aware of various health products, health services available and generally be informed on health issues. The Mental Health Information Centre was invited to create awareness of psychiatric disorders. It was an interesting experience for the MHIC staff to discuss with farmers issues around emotional well-being, mental health and psychiatric problems.



*Exhibition table at the Dept of Agriculture's Wellness Day*

## PUBLICATIONS

The 6<sup>th</sup> edition of “*False Alarm! How to Conquer the Anxiety Disorders*” has been successfully printed through the kind donations of Wyeth, GlaxoSmith-Kline, Lundbeck and Janssen-Cilag and is currently available from our offices.

We are involved with the second edition of the English and Afrikaans Psychiatry Textbooks from the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Stellenbosch. Both books will be available shortly.

Our “*Psychiatric Medications in Primary Care: Algorithms and Guidelines*” book will be sent to the graphic designer soon. As in previous years Annerine Roos and the rest of the MHIC staff are working hard to update all the entries in our “*Mental Health Resource Guide of Southern Africa*”.

## AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

### *Substance Abuse Awareness Week*

During the week of 20- 26 June 2005 the MHIC had its first **Substance Abuse Awareness Campaign** in which we focused on making young people more aware of the impact of substance abuse on mental health. We adopted the United Nations theme for this day, “**Value yourself, Make healthy choices**”. This year we paid special attention to the effects of dagga and TIK because these substances seem to be very popular amongst Western Cape youth.

Press releases on the impact of dagga use on emotional health; drug abuse and sexual risk behaviour; and general info on substance abuse awareness guaranteed the necessary media attention. Several radio interviews were conducted (e.g. SAFM, Radio Tygerberg, ...) and many newspaper articles were published.

Substance Abuse Awareness Kits were sent to over 100 High schools in Western Cape and distributed via the email list of the Department of Social Services.

Our call centre was on hand to answer questions from interested people and link our callers with community resources. We collaborated with other substance abuse role players and participated in their activities (e.g. the SANCA event) to ensure the highest possible impact of this campaign.



*Flyer that was distributed to Western Cape schools*



*Exhibition table at the SANCA Youth Event*

On the evening of June 23<sup>rd</sup> the MHIC took part in the **SANCA youth event** at Parow High School. SANCA (South African National Council against Alcohol and other drug abuse) is a popular NGO with nation wide offices (in Western Cape alone they have 8 offices), offering outpatient accessible substance abuse counselling. During the SANCA youth event young people and interested parents were entertained by a number of top groups like Black Noise, N2, Claire, Godessa, a Gospel Choir and Super Dan. The MHIC was asked to highlight the educational message and hence prepared a multi media presentation on substance abuse. Prof Willie Daniels (from the MRC Unit on Anxiety Disorders and the University of Stellenbosch) aided by presenting an entertaining and interesting talk on the effects of drugs and alcohol on the brain. The MHIC also manned a stall that same evening at the information exhibition on substance abuse, mental health and healthy choices.

## FUTURE EVENTS

We are busy preparing for our October awareness campaign, the National Anxiety Disorders Awareness Campaign. The World Federation for Mental Health theme for this year is “*Mental and Physical Health across the Life span*”.

## CONGRESS UPDATE

Many international leaders in the field of anxiety disorders have agreed to present at the International Anxiety Disorders Conference 2006 e.g. Herman Westenberg, Stefano Pallanti, David Baldwin, Borwin Bandelow, David Castle, Donatella Marazitti, Kees van Heeringen, Kathryn Connor and many more. The full information of the second announcement can be found on the following website: [www.mentalhealthsa.co.za/anxietyconference.html](http://www.mentalhealthsa.co.za/anxietyconference.html)



## MRC UNIT ON ANXIETY AND STRESS DISORDERS NEWS

### *Achievements*

Congratulations to Dr. Bavi Vythilingum who was chosen as the Faculty of Health Sciences' best post-graduate student for 2004 - an outstanding achievement!! Bavi was honoured at the Academic Achievement Evening 22 June 2005.



*Dr Bavi Vythilingum at the Academic Achievement Evening*

Congratulations to Joalida Smith who has had her Hendrik Vrouwes Research Scholarship renewed for 2005!

### *Farewells*

**Renee de Wit**, a clinical psychologist who did the neuropsychological assessments for the NIDA fMRI study on the effects of Dagga and Mandrax on cognition, and the Sydenham's Chorea study, decided to pursue a career in private practice. She will still be involved in the Unit at an ad hoc basis.

**Dr. Jacqueline Muller** moved to Gauteng at the end of July. She has been part of the Unit for 3 years and was mainly involved with research on somatoform disorders. We wish her a smooth transition to a new environment and hope her family will settle in easily.

**Femke Vink**, a final year Psychology student from Amsterdam (the Netherlands), pleasantly surprised the unit at the beginning of the year by being such an enjoyable colleague and great assistance in the HIV\Mental Health Study. She came to Cape Town for 5 months to do research on PTSD in HIV patients. Soon she was faced with the frustrations, headaches but also fun and excitement that recruitment and research entails. Almost immediately she adapted to the South African situation and fitted right into the team of researchers and the Unit as a whole. It is sad for us to say goodbye to such a won-

## MRC UNIT ON ANXIETY AND STRESS DISORDERS NEWS

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derful person. We hope to see her again in the near future.



*Lindelwa Plaatjies and Femke Vink*

### *Welcome to Lindelwa Plaatjies:*

Lindelwa is really what our MRC Unit has been looking for a long time! Lindelwa is fluent in Xhosa, Afrikaans and English, and has been able to contribute enormously to the HIV/Mental Health study. Our new colleague is trained as a social worker. She helps out on a part time basis, Tuesdays and Fridays, and collaborates with Dr. Dana Niehaus on the other days. A huge welcome to her!

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## MHIC

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