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MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION CENTRE OF SOUTH AFRICA

2004 YEAR-END SUMMARY

The Mental Health Information Centre (MHIC) focussed its 2004 psycho-educational and awareness activities on the destigmatisation of mental illness and on mental health in primary care. In line with this, a highlight of this past year was coordinating and co-hosting the first *Psychiatry for General Practice Congress* at Spier Wine Estate. Another major entry on our activity calendar was hosting the seventh annual and the third national *Mental Health Media Awards* as part of our October Mental Health Awareness Month campaign. Both these events received excellent feedback and have inspired us to continue improving on providing our mental health services in 2005 and into the future.

books of Psychiatry that will be available in early 2005.

We hosted 10 **CPD activities** for primary health care workers in collaboration with the Dept of Health that addressed a variety of mental health topics including the DSM-IV, anxiety disorders, depression, dementia and psychosis. The MHIC participated in an **open day** with the theme: *Destigmatising and the Roll of the Multi-Professional Team* at Stikland Hospital, and in two *ABSA Health and Wellness Days* run in Cape Town and Bellville. We hosted a full-day **workshop** on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder to mental health professionals, and a **Stress Symposium** to the staff of Paarl Hospital. The MHIC also presented a series of 4 **lay education talks** at the Old Mutual Head Office in Cape Town and 3 talks to support groups and the general public.

PSYCHOEDUCATION

The MHIC updated and published three **books** this year: the *False Alarm! How to Conquer the Anxiety Disorders* (5th edition), the *Psychiatric Medications in Primary Care: Algorithms and Guidelines* (7th edition), and the *Mental Health Resource Guide of Southern Africa* (8th edition). Furthermore, we are hard at work with the updating and editing of the new English and Afrikaans *Text-*




Dr Juan Schröten speaking on Advances in the Management of Depression to a lay audience.

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PSYCHOEDUCATION CONTINUED

We were allocated 12 sessions this year to lecture to the final year **medical students** at the University of Stellenbosch on stigma in psychiatry and mental health promotion. We continued our collaboration with the Department of **Nursing** at Stellenbosch University, providing a rotation in community psychiatry to all final year BCur students as well as ran a support group for the **post-graduate students** of that department. Postgraduate students from the University of the Western Cape were accommodated for the first time at our call centre during September and October.

The MHIC **website** has increasingly become a useful tool for disseminating information to a wider audience including the general public and health professionals. Selected **algorithms** from our psychiatric medications book are available online, and linked to the CPD service www.ecpdsa.co.za. Our site has **recruitment information** for the research trials run by the MRC Anxiety Disorders Unit, as well as a section dedicated to **Cochrane Reviews** conducted by Unit staff. Many of our mental

health **leaflets and brochures** can be accessed directly from the website. The website received almost 134 000 hits the past year, with an average of over 11 000 requests a month. March, the month of Brain Awareness Week, was our busiest month with **14 532 hits**, followed by October (Mental Health Awareness Month) with 12 185 hits.

The MHIC **Call Centre** was kept busy throughout the year and received close to 2000 calls, the majority originating from the Western Cape (55%), although we also managed many calls from Gauteng (16%), Kwazulu Natal (11%), Eastern Cape (10%), and Free State (7%). Most callers were patients or family of patients (51%), medical professionals (26%), or the media (13%). Callers most often had queries relating to the mood (29%), anxiety (27%), or psychotic (19%) disorders, and we managed many ADHD (12%) and dementia-related (10%) queries. Many requested referral to a mental health professional (22%), support group (18), information on medication (16%), or about the MHIC services.

CONGRESSES

The MHIC, together with the Departments of Psychiatry and Family Medicine of the University of Stellenbosch and the MRC Anxiety & Stress Disorders Research Unit, hosted the first **Psychiatry for General Practice Congress** at Spier Wine Estate in September. Although we focussed on the Western Cape, healthcare practitioners from across the country (and even some from neighbouring countries and further afield) signed up to attend this two-day meeting where expert speakers addressed topics ranging from the assessment and diagnosis of common mental conditions to treatment and related issues. We received positive feedback from presenters, attendees, and sponsors, with most commenting on the need for this type of conference. We will certainly consider hosting a similar event in the near future.



Live music performance at the Spier Congress during a lunch break.

RESEARCH

Researchers of the **MRC Unit on Anxiety and Stress Disorders** once again proved the high standard of work delivered by this Unit. Congratulations to Prof Soraya Seedat who was presented with a MRC Career Award as well as the NRF Thuthuka Award. Christine Lochner and Jacqueline Muller who were both awarded MRC Scholarships and CINF Rafaelson Awards (the first time the Rafaelson Award has gone to anyone from Africa!). Paul Carey won the prestigious CINF poster award and achieved the first MRI images of the African continent – a remarkable achievement indeed! Joalida Smit was awarded the Hendrik Vrouwes Scholarship, and Annerine Roos received a MRC Allied Health Professionals Scholarship for Doctoral studies in 2005. Well done to all!



Prof Soraya Seedat

CONGRESS CONTINUED

Charmaine and Winnie attended the **13th National SASOP Conference** at Champagne Sports Resort, Drakensberg, where both presented a poster presentation on recently completed research. The MHIC was able to display educational materials to mental health professionals, and used this opportunity to promote our services to various mental health roleplayers from across the country.

RESEARCH CONTINUED

The MHIC completed a **WHO Project Atlas** survey on Mental Health Research in Low and Middle Income Countries, canvassing information for South Africa. This was conducted under contract to the Mental Health: Evidence and Research, Department of Health & Substance Abuse, WHO in Geneva. The exercise expanded our knowledge of mental health and assisted in creating awareness of our role in the mental health and research sector. Further, we published an article in a **WHO/WFMH publication** on Mental Health Promotion that described successful case studies from all over the world. The MHIC and students rotating at the Call Centre conducted a preliminary survey on the prevalence of co-occurring **mental health and deafness** in patients at psychiatric hospitals and hospitals with limited psychiatric facilities. It was found that health facilities in South Africa are poorly equipped to deal with co-occurring mental illness and deafness. Prof Willie Pienaar presented the results of this survey at the first Mental Health and Deafness Workshop held in Worcester during October.



Dr Jacqueline Muller presenting on somatisation disorders to primary healthcare staff.

The MHIC and final year nursing students of the Department of Nursing, University of Stellenbosch, conducted a study to determine the impact of **CPD training for primary health care professionals**. Results indicated that CPD significantly improved knowledge of mental health, was valuable to individual work settings, may create awareness of mental illnesses and thereby improve recognition and appropriate professional intervention.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS/PROMOTION

The MHIC was invited to attend a **GAMIAN** (Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks) meeting in Philadelphia, USA, where various research and advocacy groups from across the globe discussed common issues and attended a parallel Freedom From Fear Conference. Annerine represented us at this annual event. We look forward to liaising with our international partners to work towards increased awareness and destigmatization of mental illness.

Brain Awareness Week (15 – 21 March 2004): The 2004 BAW was launched with a Media Tea that resulted in 2 television news reports, 8 radio interviews, 10 newspaper and 30 internet articles giving coverage of the campaign. A national BAW poster and logo competition for learners, educational talks for lay and professional audiences, live Internet chat rooms, and an educational big-screen video at Canal Walk were some of the events aimed at lay and professional education. The MHIC was honoured to receive a visit from the International Liaison Officer of the European Dana Alliance for the Brain (EDAB) and to have published in the EDAB International Report on Brain Awareness Week. A huge thank you to the support groups and CWTV Canal Walk; the Dean's Office, Health Sciences Faculty, University of Stellenbosch; the Dept of Health: Mental Health Programme; EDAB; Exclusive Books; Health24; Janssen-Cilag; Lundbeck; Novartis; and Panorama Medi-Clinic for supporting this campaign!



The poster display at Panorama Hospital during Brain Awareness Week.

National Anxiety Disorders Awareness Week (4 – 10 October 2004): The MHIC hosted the 8th **National Anxiety Disorders Awareness Week (NADAW)** during the week of World Mental Health Day, 10 October. The theme for this year was: *“The relationship between physical and mental health”*. Dr Jacqueline Muller compiled a media release on somatoform disorders and the MHIC collaborated with the Department of Health: Mental Health Program to distribute media releases and lay information.

We hosted the 3rd annual **National Mental Health Media Awards** as part of the October 2004 campaign. Self-

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS/PROMOTION CONTINUED

nominations were received for the first time this year, although we still made use of a national voting panel. Mr Conrad Sidego, Senior General Manager of Corporate Affairs at Media24 presented the keynote address at the Awards ceremony. Ilse Pauw of Health24 was once again voted as winner in the Radio/TV/Internet category as well as the 2004 Overall winner, while Laura du Preez of Personal Finance won the Magazine category and Llewellyn Kriel of the Mail & Guardian the Newspaper category. Certificates of Special Recognition were presented to Robyn von Geusau of Shape magazine and John Annandale of Reader's Digest magazine.



Ilse Pauw (Health24) and Chantal Cooper (Rape Crisis Centre) with the quilt made by a rape survivor support group.

Working with the **popular media** remains an important part of our psycho-education and awareness work. We distributed media releases, gave interviews and referred journalists to various mental health professionals, researchers and consumers in order to encourage early recognition and appropriate management of mental illness. This led to our taking part in 16 radio interviews, 2 television news briefs, 22 magazine articles, 47 newspaper articles, 55 Internet-hosted articles and 6 other forms of popular media.



Finally, we would like to *wish you all a safe and happy Holiday Season and a wonderful New Year.*

NEW STAFF

The MHIC has undergone various staff changes in the past year. Winnie De Roover was appointed as the new MHIC Manager, Johnny Daniels was enlisted as the Administrative Officer, and Annerine Roos formally became part of the team as Office & Research Assistant. Liezel de Villiers also joined the MHIC in November 2004 as Research Assistant, and to continue Winnie's industry liaison work while she is on maternity leave. Charmaine Hugo resigned as Director of the MHIC, to take effect in January 2005. She will be furthering her career in industrial psychology, and hopes to be spending more time with her family. Winnie will take over the running of the MHIC when she returns from her maternity leave.

A SPECIAL WORD OF THANKS

A special thank you to our **sponsors** and those who have contributed financially towards the MHIC. Special recognition needs to be made of Janssen-Cilag and Lundbeck who continuously make educational grants towards our centre. Aspen Pharmacare, Astra Zeneca and Sandoz generously sponsored many of our educational materials, in addition to Eli Lilly, GlaxoSmithKline, Novartis, Solvay Pharma, and Wyeth who supported our publications and awareness campaigns. Also, we need to thank all those who participated in and supported the GP Congress, including Adcock-Ingram, Pfizer, Pharmaplan, Sanofi-Aventis and the Associated Specialised Psychiatric Clinics. Thank you! without **your support** we would not have reached our goals for the year.

We would like to **thank** all those who have **collaborated** with us throughout the year. We look forward to working with you again in 2005 to achieve our joint goals of promoting mental health in South Africa. We were fortunate to work with international mental health groups such as the World Federation for Mental Health, European Dana Alliance for the Brain, Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives, Global Alliance for Mental Illness Advocacy Networks and the World Health Organisation (WHO), and hope to do so again in the near future.

IMPROVEMENT WITHOUT IMPAIRMENT