



MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION CENTRE OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first 2006 edition of the Mental Health Information Centre's newsletter in which we report on our educational events of the past months, our publications, as well as the recent staff changes at the MHIC and MRC Unit on Anxiety Disorders.

We hope you have enjoyed a wonderful Easter break that fuelled your enthusiasm for work and your energy levels!!!



NEW STAFF AT THE MHIC

We are delighted to introduce Kerrin Lewey, who joined us at the end of February as MHIC office manager.

Kerrin is currently studying for an Honours degree in Psychology through UNISA. Last year she worked for the Schizophrenia Foundation of South Africa, first as office administrator/ manager and later as director.

Through her keen interest in mental health issues and her prior experience, Kerrin fitted in smoothly with the MHIC team. In this short time span, she has



Picture 1: Kerrin settling in

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NEW STAFF AT THE MHIC CONTINUED

shown a great interest in developing new skills and has proven to be an invaluable assistant in the day-to-day running of the MHIC call centre. Kerrin orientates, supervises and evaluates the nursing students that rotate through the call centre. She also liaises with the pharmaceutical industry, assists with organising educational events and handles telephonic and electronic mental health queries.

Further, Kerrin is involved in the recently started Cross-University Brain Behaviour Initiative, where she holds the position of communications officer.

Apart from working and studying, Kerrin enjoys reading, dancing, music and socialising.

KOREAN ANXIETY WORKSHOP

On 23 February a group of 10 Korean psychiatrists visited the Medical campus of the University of Stellenbosch to co-host a South African-Korean Anxiety workshop.

During this half-day series of lectures, research findings from Korea and South Africa were presented to interested local psychiatrists and medical students and the audience actively engaged in discussion and giving feedback on the presentations.

It was fascinating to learn more about the differences and similarities in the cultural expression of anxiety disorders.

REPORT-BACK INTERNATIONAL ANXIETY DISORDERS



The International Anxiety Disorders Conference took place from 24- 26 February 2006 at Spier Wine Estate, Stellenbosch.



Picture 2: Nelda Rousseau, conference secretary

Twenty expert speakers (mainly international) updated a modest audience of

160 local and international psychiatrists on the most recent advances in the field of anxiety disorders. Relevant questions to clinical practise and contested topics in research were addressed and debated. On Saturday 25 February, Prof Dan Stein opened the scientific programme and welcomed the guests and speakers, after



Picture 3: Presentation Prof Westenberg

which Prof Marazziti, Prof Miguel and Dr. Castle discussed diagnostic dilemmas with regards to Obsessive Compulsive Spectrum Disorders. This was followed by three presentations on the neurobiological underpinnings of anxiety disorders by Prof Nutt, Prof Westenberg and Dr Denys. After lunch, treatment principles of anxiety disorders were discussed by Prof Baldwin, Prof Fineberg, and Prof Allgulander.

The next day Prof Zohar, Prof Seedat and Dr Connor presented innovative views on Post Traumatic Stress Disorders followed by a session on issues across the anxiety disorders. After lunch Prof Bandelow discussed ways of defining remis-

Report-back IADC continued

sion, Dr. Vythilingum presented on anxiety during and after pregnancy and Prof van Heeringen reviewed the importance of suicide across the anxiety disorders. The conference dinner was held at Moyo's, where our delegates could enjoy a real African feast.

The stunning venue, wonderful food and stimulating talks and discussions contributed to this

conference being a big success.



Picture 4: Conference dinner at Moyo's



Picture 5: Dr. Castle adorned with traditional African face painting

REPORT- BACK BRAIN AWARENESS WEEK 2006

Every year in March, hundreds of innovative public events and activities worldwide bring the excitement of scientific progress in brain research to the general public during a campaign called **Brain Awareness Week**.

Coordinated by the European Dana Alliance for the Brain, and the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives in the US, Brain Awareness Week has become a major international collaboration.

The Brain Awareness Campaign unites more than 1,875 partner organizations; including schools, universities, medical and research organizations, patient advocacy groups, government agencies, service groups, and professional organizations in 62 countries; all communicating the progress of brain research.

The aim of this awareness campaign is to educate the public

about the function of the central nervous system and explain the importance of brain research as well as make people aware of the resources available to the public. It is an opportunity to let people know what is being done to diagnose, treat and prevent disorders of the brain -such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, stroke, schizophrenia, autism, learning problems, Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, epilepsy, Tourette's syndrome, brain injuries and depression- which affect the lives of millions of people.



This year Brain Awareness Week was celebrated from 13-19 March. The MHIC's contribution to this campaign mainly consisted of media liaison, resulting in various written pieces and radio-interviews. As in previous years, our call centre was on hand to answer calls from the public and professionals and information packages were distributed to a selection of relevant support groups and interested callers.

MHIC PUBLICATIONS

The Mental Health Resource Guide 2006 is available from our offices. The electronic version of the Resource Guide is still under construction but will be loaded on our website later this year.

MRC UNIT ON ANXIETY AND STRESS DISORDERS- NEWS

We would like to accord a warm **welcome** to all the following people who recently joined the MRC Research Unit on Anxiety and Stress Disorders:

Dr. Keith Ganasen, a medical officer with interest in specialising in Psychiatry, is assisting Dr. Paul Carey in various studies e.g. the Adult PTSD (Olanzapine) trial; the efficacy of antidepressants in HIV positive patients on antiretrovirals (Escitalopram) trial; and a prospective study of posttraumatic stress symptoms in Mortuary Workers.

Kim Johnson completed her M.A. thesis in Psychology at the University of Stellenbosch in 2005. She assists Prof Soraya Seedat with recruitment of participants and administering questionnaires on the following studies: Bathuthuzele Youth Stress Clinic, Pharmacological Prophylaxis in Rape Survivors, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy in Rape Survivors, Adolescent PTSD, HIV Maternal and TB studies.

Fatima Parker will obtain a M.Sc. degree in Research Psychology from the University of Stellenbosch by the end of this year. Fatima is involved in the Social Anxiety Disorders study, PTSD Healthy controls, Adolescent PTSD Follow up, Bathuthuzele recruitment, HIV Maternal Study and TB Study. Her duties entail traveling to clinics and schools to recruit, administering questionnaires, booking appointments with patients, administering

computerised batteries to the Social Anxiety Disorder patients and entering data. She is also involved as a volunteer with Big Brother Big Sister South Africa (mentoring a mentor) and SHAWCO (debriefing volunteers who go out into the communities).

Ilse Jordaan obtained a M.Sc. (Psychology) from the University of Stellenbosch and a M.A. (Clinical Psychology) from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU).

She will be assisting with neuropsychological assessments on various projects, including the Sydenham's Chorea study and an ongoing study comparing traumatised adolescents with and without posttraumatic stress disorder. She is interested in hypnotherapy for anxiety disorders, neuropsychology, EMDR for PTSD, psychodynamic psychotherapy for adolescents and adults, as well as longterm psychotherapy for people with borderline personality disorder.

Last, but definitely not least, we would like to introduce **Helena Smit**, who trained as a dental nurse and assisted many dentists in their practise until she started studying again (Physiology and Bio-Chemistry) and worked as a data-capturer. On 16 January she joined the MRC Unit on Anxiety Disorders as the new administrator. Due to her strong will and motivation she has managed to take over successfully from Thelma

Fennie. Apart from working hard, Helena has a passion for expressionist painting, the outdoors, as well as a keen involvement in various community projects.



Picture 6: Helena Smit

Farewell to:

End March we said our goodbyes to Johnny Daniels, who has been the MHIC administrator and webmaster for the past 2 years as well as administrator and data-capturer for 5 years on the Genetics of Anxiety Disorders Research project which is being lead by Christine Lochner. Johnny has moved to the Zoology Department of the University of Stellenbosch where he hopes to further develop his career in IT.

Achievements:

Congratulations to Sian Hemmings who graduated with her PhD in Medical Biochemistry. Her dissertation on the genetics of Obsessive Compulsive Disorders was titled: "*The Molecular Aetiology of OCD and Clinically Defined Subtypes of OCD*".



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