
INFORMATION MATTERS

Spring 2005

NEWSLETTER OF THE SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY OF NOVA SCOTIA

How do we *live* with schizophrenia?

The Schizophrenia Society of Nova Scotia, in partnership with Capital Health Mental Health Services, the Cape Breton District Health Authority and the Department of Health's Consumer Led Initiative Project, will present the 17th annual Living with Schizophrenia conference.

This year's conference will be held in both Halifax and Sydney. Cape Breton University hosts the event Thursday, June 23. The Halifax conference will be held Friday, June 24 at Pier 21.

"The reason why SSNS decided to host a conference in both Halifax and Sydney was to allow more people the opportunity attend," explained SSNS executive director Hugh Bennett.

"One of our missions as a society is to create public awareness of schizophrenia. At this conference you'll hear from the best what it means to live with schizophrenia."

Bennett says 2005 will be seen as pivotal year in Nova Scotia for advances in best treatment and best treatment strategies for schizophrenia and related disorders.

"This conference provides people with a unique opportunity to learn more about the issue that has been defined in the 21st century," he said.

Dr. Xavier Amador, one of the world's leading authority on schizophrenia, will be speaking at both Halifax and Sydney conference locations.

A psychologist, professor, news consultant and author of *I Am Not Sick*, Dr. Amador is best known for his work on the problem of poor insight into the illness in individuals with



Dr. Xavier Amador

schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. He also spoke at the 2004 conference. He's a leader in the topic of 'how to help those that do not believe they are sick'.

Featured speakers in the Halifax held conference include Dr. Scott Theriault and Dr. Bianca Lauria-Horner.

Dr. Theriault is Clinical Director of the East Coast Forensic Hospital and

acting Chief of Staff of the Department of Psychiatry, Capital District Health Authority. Interested in all areas of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychosocial Rehabilitation.

Dr. Lauria-Horner is presently leading a project involving the development of an educational program for first line law enforcement officers in the recognition of emotionally disturbed persons.

For a complete conference schedule please see page four.

Mental health gets \$4 million

Provincial health minister Angus MacIsaac says individuals with mental health problems will see new and enhanced mental health services as a result of an additional \$4 million funding in over the next two health budgets.

"This government is making good on its promise to expand mental health services that will improve access to high quality care across the province," said MacIsaac at the IWK Health Centre April 14.

"Historically, mental health has been underfunded, yet we are slowly making progress to change this. With program standards in place, we can easily identify the areas of greatest need, which means any new dollars coming forward can make the most difference to Nova Scotians."

The new funding will be used by district health authorities and the IWK Health Centre to increase access to mental health services in three priority areas: services for children and youth; crisis/emergency services; and community-based supports for those with chronic and persistent mental illness.

Improving mental health services within communities helps people get the care they need, as close to home as possible, and helps prevent, reduce, or defer unnecessary trips to the emergency room.

IWK Health Centre CEO Anne McGuire says she's pleased the funding is being directed where it's needed the most: toward programs that support mental health intervention and care for children and youth.

"This attention to mental health care for the young assures us that access will continue to improve, and standards will be met," said McGuire.

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Schizophrenia Society of Nova Scotia



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*"Alleviating the suffering
caused by schizophrenia"*

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CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

Cumberland County

Submitted by Mike MacDonald

A **summer BBQ** at the shore is planned for June 19. All members and the Pit Players are invited again to entertain our Chapter in music and laughter.

Any Board Members of SSNS present in the area of Pugwash at that time, are cordially invited. The group from Mental Health Services working on the Proposal for a Club House in Amherst are also invited to attend.

The first meeting of the **Strengthening Families Together** in Cumberland County was held in Amherst on Monday, May 2.

The two leaders for Cumberland County, Sharon Murphy and Lorraine MacDonald, have begun the 10 week secessions after meeting with Cathy Thurston CEO of Mental Health Services and getting their backing.

The Cumberland County Chapter had

a Hawaiian Party at the home of Mike and Lorraine MacDonald this past month and all members enjoyed themselves. We especially enjoyed the music and singing of Elvis Patriquin.

Cape Breton

Submitted by Joe Bruce

Detailed information package for families of those with schizophrenia is now available within the Cape Breton District Health Authority.

The package took about 11/2 years to develop by the family working group. Information was obtained from the caregivers, the Schizophrenia Society, and professionals. The launching was held in Sydney, May 5th at "Crossroads" which also celebrated their 10th anniversary.

On Thursday June 23, psychologist and author **Dr. Xavier Amador** speaks at the University of Cape Breton from 1:30 – 4:00 p.m. Admission is free. To register please call Janice MacKillop at 567-7913.

Mental health gets \$4 million boost

Continued from page 1

"This will mean more young Nova Scotians can access the mental health care they need, when they need it."

Dr. Scott Theriault, clinical director, Capital Health mental health program, said the new dollars for community mental health services and emergency services is in line with where we are focusing services in our district.

"We are completing strategic planning for mental health, and additional investment will certainly help enhance services for the people in our district and across the province," he said.

In 2003, Nova Scotia became the first province in Canada to establish a strategic direction and core program standards for mental health. At the time, it was estimated that it would take five to ten years and an additional investment of \$20 million to implement the mental health standards. As a first step, government added \$2 million to the 2003-04 budget.

Last year Mental Health Services received less than four per cent of the overall \$2.1 billion health care budget.



Metro Chapter annual meeting

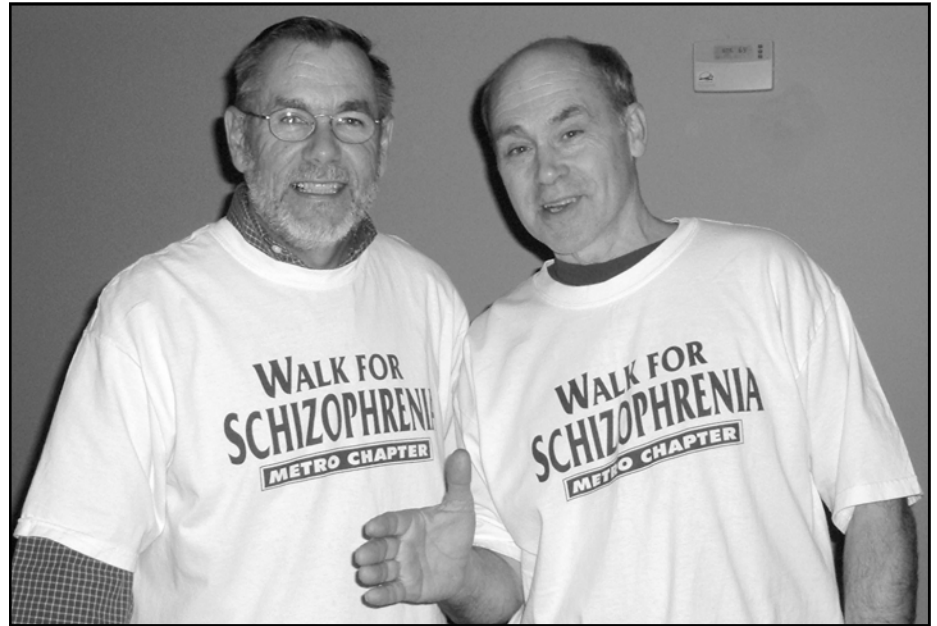
The AGM for SSNS Metro chapter will be held on Thursday, September 15, 2005 in the Community Room, Sobeys, North and Windsor, Halifax, commencing at 7 p.m.

The guest speaker will be Gordon Spurrell, DTM Toastmaster, who will speak on the benefits of Gavel Clubs for persons with the illness and their caregivers. The election of officers will then follow. Refreshments will be available.

Toll-free info line

The Schizophrenia Society of Nova Scotia offers a toll-free line — 1-800-465-2601 — which connects people throughout Nova Scotia to the provincial office in Dartmouth. Although this is not a crisis line experienced staff are available to listen, empathize and discuss issues around schizophrenia and related mental illnesses.

They provide information on the illness, understanding to the caller and support through advocacy.



Hey, let's play a round of golf...

Actor John Dunsworth, right, also known as Mr. Lahey of the hit TV show Trailer Park Boys, is pictured here with SSNS Metro Golf Tournament chairman Bill Gard.

John Dunsworth will be an honorary host for the SSNS Golf tournament held Sept. 13 at the Granite Springs Golf Course.

Volunteers are needed to help with the tournament organization and prize acquisition. To become involved, please email Bill at ssnsgolf@eastlink.ca.

The Schizophrenia Society extends a special thanks to Bill for his leadership in planning this important SSNS fund-raising event.

For Metro (Granite Springs) team sponsorship fee is \$1,200 (team of 4) and \$200 for individual golfers including a \$100 charitable receipt while spaces last.



For information on the upcoming **Cape Breton SSNS Golf Tournament** please contact SSNS or the Cape Breton Chapter .

SSNS would also like to thank **ScotiaBank** for encouraging more Golf 2005 and its continued support for the Schizophrenia Society of Nova Scotia.



John Dunsworth as Mr. Lahey of the Trailer Park Boys

GOT MILK???

Donate your Sobeys grocery receipts to the Schizophrenia Society of Nova Scotia. SSNS receives a donation from Sobeys for the receipts

LIVING with Schizophrenia 2005

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Full Conference Fee: \$70

Sydney Fee: Available

Students: \$25

****Please call 1-800-465-2601 for
special consumer rate.**

**PLEASE REGISTER EARLY,
SPACE IS LIMITED!!**

***CALL REGARDING LUNCH
SERVICE ASAP**

***PARKING \$5 PER DAY**

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTAL CODE: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

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PLEASE DETACH & MAIL TO:

SSNS
P.O. Box 1004
Nova Scotia Hospital
Dartmouth, NS B2Y 3Z9

For further details call:
1-800-465-2601

MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE
TO THE SCHIZOPHRENIA
SOCIETY OF NOVA SCOTIA

SYDNEY, June 23 CONFERENCE AGENDA Cape Breton University

- 1: 30 INTRODUCTION OF
SPEAKER
- 1:35 DR. XAVIER AMADOR
- 4:00 CONCLUSION

HALIFAX, June 24 CONFERENCE AGENDA Pier 21

Master of Ceremonies
Mr. Hugh Bennett

- 8:15 REGISTRATION &
COFFEE
- 9:00 WELCOME &
INTRODUCTION
- Ms. Louise Bradley
Director, Mental Health &
Forensic Psychiatry
Capital Health*

- 9:15 BEST PRACTICES FOR
NOVA SCOTIA
- Dr. Scott Theriault
Chief of Forensic Medicine*

*Dr. Bianca Lauria-Horner,
First Response Programs*

PANELISTS :
Ms. Louise Bradley MSc, RN
Director, Mental Health and
Forensic Psychiatry Capital Health;
Adjunct Faculty, Dalhousie School
of Nursing

Professor Jean Hughes, PhD, RN
Associate Professor, Dalhousie
School of Nursing

Dr. David Whitehorn PhD
Coordinator NS Early Psychosis
Program Adjunct Faculty,
Dalhousie School of Nursing

**Rev. George Leach S.J., MEd,
Dmin,** Outreach Worker for Hope
Cottage, Jesuit Centre for
Spirituality

12:00 LUNCH- *Reserved Seating
View Booths*

1:30 COMMUNICATION
AND INSIGHT –
HOLISTIC
PRACTICES
Dr. Xavier Amador

3:30 CLOSING ACTIVITIES

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What is the best treatment, strategy?

Here's a simple question: what is the best medication for an illness such as schizophrenia?

Really knowing what the best medication is for every individual is a complicated answer. If the individual with the illness has 'good support', the medication strategy, per se, may be to change the medication and dosage amount.

A friend — I'll call her Jane — has schizophrenia. She depends upon her family's support to see things in her that she might not be aware of. Jane has a great doctor, one who will adjust her medication and is super sensitive to Jane and understands the individual who Jane is.

The challenge with schizophrenia is that this is an illness that no one can see. Unlike other diseases, there's no simple 'test' for schizophrenia; the test is an individual's behaviour. How do you test behaviour when so often times that person doesn't believe he or she is sick?

From personal experience, I know that a great responsibility rests on every single person to be involved in the so-called behavior test.

My brother Craig became really sick in 1985. Before Craig began treatment for schizophrenia, his family members were the only ones who knew before hand that he was indeed sick.

The problem back then was that we, as family members, could do very little to help Craig.

Until we convinced Craig to access the medical system, the doctors, and psychiatrists, the only people who watched his behavior were family and friends.

Over the last 20 plus years, friends and family have did so much to help the doctors and health care professionals understand what medication was



A Message from the Executive Director

Hugh Douglas Bennett

working and what was not working quite so well.

And what about the cost of medications used to treat schizophrenia? It's my opinion that cost should not matter. If there is a medication that works best for an individual, that that is a great opportunity and a great human investment.

It is not my place, and never will be, to say Medication A is better than Medication B or that injectables are better than pills or that this dosage is better than another. All I can say is that it will be a wonderful day when the best treatment — best treatment strategy — will be made without the knowledge of which company makes the product or how much it costs.

What's important is that the medication being prescribed is the best possible solution for that individual's needs. Call me a naive, but the choice of medicine should have nothing to do with price. There is something ethically wrong when people are prescribed incorrect medications because they are cheaper!

Let's get real: schizophrenia needs to be recognized as a physical illness with psychological symptoms and hard physical impacts.

For schizophrenia, the choice of medication must be made according to best treatment and best treatment strategy and this includes the necessary supports and medication monitoring.

As many people know, older medications used in the treatment of schizophrenia frequently have negative side

affects which have been the main reason for people being non medication compliant. Newer meds have fewer side affects, thus, it's not surprising that people are more willing to stay compliant on them.

The fact of the matter is the cost of schizophrenia medications will not bankrupt the province of Nova Scotia.

Providing the best treatment medications to people living with schizophrenia should be viewed by the policy makers as an economic investment. Why aren't the decision makers who have disallowed the better, albeit more expensive medications, looking at how much money the medications will save the entire health care system?

With schizophrenia, doctors cannot use an x-ray or a cell count. Schizophrenia is diagnosed by the powers of observation. This illness can be treated. Rehabilitation continues with a multi-disciplinary team which includes not only health care professionals but friends, family and neighbours.

The best treatment strategy is early diagnosis. The individual living with the illness needs support and encouragement and the correct medication.

Perhaps some day, the treatment of schizophrenia will be a one dose cure but in 2005 we can only commit to the cause of best treatment and best treatment strategy.

Perhaps some day our system will provide fast diagnoses and treatment and provide re-integration into that individual's community in a stigma-free environment.

This province has an ethical obligation to provide a best treatment for every individual regardless of the cost.

If a new cancer cure was found, would the province deny supplying the treatment because it couldn't afford it?

To alleviate the suffering

The mission of the Schizophrenia Society of Nova Scotia is: “to alleviate the suffering caused by schizophrenia.” But what does that mean exactly and furthermore what is SSNS and what do we do?

SSNS is a registered charitable society made up of volunteers with a broad range of skills and backgrounds reflecting the diversity of Nova Scotia. There are only two full-time paid staff of SSNS situated at the provincial headquarters at the Nova Scotia Hospital in Dartmouth Nova Scotia as well as nine formal chapters located strategically across the province. Our shared goal is to meet the complex needs of our province related to all aspects of schizophrenia.

We partner with a broad range of organizations allowing us access to resources, facilities and services across the province. Our volunteers and chapter leaders come not only from families directly affected by schizophrenia but also from allied health care professionals, educators, media professionals, and community leaders of all types, ages and backgrounds. The range of our partnerships and activities is reflected in provincial and chapter based websites and newsletters. (See www.ssns.ca and links)

The Schizophrenia Society of Nova Scotia is truly a ‘grass-roots-network’ organization with our staff and volunteers serving on a range of committees and contributing in various ways to aid in moving forward the needs, interests and lives of those affected by schizophrenia.

Through 2004 and into 2005 this has included intense interest and

participation in the development of new mental health legislation for Nova Scotia, known as “Bill 109”; the fate of which we expect will be decided soon. Yet while we work with the formal government and education system distributing a wide range of information, resource kits books and other helpful information we take pride in being a community based first line of assistance -- always available to help those individuals and families living with schizophrenia and related mental illness. While we are not and do not operate as health care professionals we are an intermediary resource between the formal services and the community. We are a dedicated network that ‘does what can be done’ to prevent and alleviate the suffering and assist individuals and families with the process of recovery.

We effectively utilize the resources and services that are developed by the Schizophrenia Society of Canada and other sources.

Our family based organization knows what it is like to live with

For every dollar spent on the support of people with schizophrenia, SSNS estimates it saves the formal and informal mental health systems \$425.

schizophrenia as most of the board members either have the illness or have family members living with schizophrenia. In 2004 and 2005 we continue to offer many services and supports:

- Services and programs targeting family and caregivers
- Information and speakers programs with schools at all levels
- Public information and awareness events.

WHAT IS SCHIZOPHRENIA?

Schizophrenia - “youth’s greatest disabler” - strikes young men and women between the age of 15 and 25. It is a medical disease of the brain that affects one out of 100 people worldwide.

Schizophrenia is not rare; its prevalence is two times greater than Alzheimer’s, five times Multiple Sclerosis, six times Insulin-dependent Diabetes and 60 times Muscular Dystrophy.

There is no known cure to date but it *can* be treated through medication and psychosocial interventions.



If untreated, schizophrenia will likely result in irreversible brain damage. However, early diagnosis, intervention and treatment will result in the greatest success, allowing most people to get their lives back on track.

2004 activity report

Activities and partnerships

SSNS activities across the province were regularly scheduled and all were designed to help move lives forward through positive activity and social interaction.

A range of club events and activities continue to operate across the province organized at the SSNS chapter level including public speaking, communications activities, recreation and games activities, and special events.

Local activities are developed by the chapter and tailored to individual community needs and interest.

In 2005 SSNS will continue to promote and expand the range of activities and partnerships with other organizations, reflecting the range of interest and resources in each area.

We continue to encourage consumers to contribute letters and stories as well as artwork and other personal contributions. Many of these are published in chapter and provincial newsletters and on SSNS websites.



Physical activities such as chapter organized walks help also create significant positive public awareness, in 2005 we hope to introduce a provincewide long distance run and continue developing the network of golf tournaments that support fund-raising as well as public education and awareness goals.

Finding support

Forums that support groups and provide immediate help for caregivers, family and friends to discuss topics and issues of interest for those that care about and care for individuals experiencing schizophrenia personally



continues to be a core activity for staff (telephone and walk-in visits) and for chapter representatives.

Typically, support is provided through chapter meetings by our staff and volunteer expertise regarding local services, and from time to time, recruiting the assistance of MLA and other specialists to champion individual issues.

SSNS remain connected with police, legal authorities and social services as well as formal health care professionals and other allied not-for-profit agencies and services.

Chapter meetings continue to provide these forums, and volunteers and chapter leaders connect with others in their communities, sharing information and encouraging contact.

In addition, in 2004 the 'Strengthening Families Together Program' began to develop momentum. After a successful pilot program in Kentville in 2004, beginning in late 2004 the program has developed activities centres in Springhill, Antigonish, Truro and Kentville.

Interest is developing for a program in Halifax and the information, about bipolar illness has been used broadly by health care professionals in Nova Scotia.

SSNS continues to be a source of information and support for those with bipolar illness and dual diagnosis as well as effects such as depression and suicide and imprisonment.

Formal system & government Chapters and staff continue to be a resource for information resource regarding available services as well advocating and articulating needs for new programs and services whether in the health care setting, community, schools or other public places.

In 2004 and 2005 our focus was and continues to be on the plan for new 'stand alone' Mental Health legislation for Nova Scotia. The Schizophrenia Society has taken a leadership role in this discussion contributing in the early stages on a position paper (published in the summer 2004 newsletter) in cooperation with the Canadian Mental Health Association. Contributions included radio and television programs, additional print and media contributions and representation in the legislature.

At the provincial and chapter level we have encouraged and interacted with MLAs from all three parties that make up Nova Scotia's minority government. We have created opportunities for public forums and dialogue while retaining a non-partisan position of support a best treatment – best – treatment – strategy position. This position was reflected in the Fall/ Winter 2004 newsletter.

Formal contributions from staff, board and volunteers continued in 2004 and into 2005 as we contributed to committees including the NS Mental Health Steering Committee, Anti-Stigma and Public Awareness Committee, Early Psychosis, and a range of restructuring and development committees across the province.



SSNS local chapters and meeting times

Metro Area Metro SSNS Share and Care for May 24 and June 28 will be held at the Community Room, Sobeys, Clayton Park at 7 p.m. Please note, there will be no business meetings of the Metro SSNS during the months of May, June, July and August. Beginning in July, the Metro SSNS Share and Care meetings will be held on the fourth Wednesday of each month in the Community Room, Sobeys, North and Windsor in Halifax, starting at 7 p.m. Refreshments available.

Lunenburg Co. 3rd Tuesday of each month at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Bridgewater, 7 p.m.

Antigonish 3rd Wednesday of each month at St James United Church. 7:30 p.m.

Cape Breton 3rd Wednesday of each month at Marconi Community College, Sydney, 7 p.m.

Cumberland 3rd Tuesday of each month at Springhill Hospital, 7 p.m.

Kentville 2nd Wednesday of each month at Armories Building, Webster Terrace, 7 p.m.

Middleton 3rd Thursday of each month at Middleton Baptist Church, 7 p.m.

Truro 1st Thursday of each month at CMHA Friendship Club. 6:30 p.m.

Yarmouth 4th Monday of each month at Waterfront Community Resource Centre, 7 p.m.

Please contact provincial office at 1-800-465-2601 for more information.

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