The Key Update Volume 1 No. 4 October 8, 2004

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS…

UPenn Collaborative on Community Integration Launches Web Site

The UPenn Collaborative on Community Integration has launched a comprehensive Web site, with a wide array of resources to help consumers integrate more effectively into the community. The UPenn Collaborative is the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on community integration of individuals with psychiatric disabilities.

The Collaborative is developing research and supports for persons with mental illness and focuses in the following areas: Community Integration Concept and History, Employment, Housing, Education, Citizenship, Language and Community Integration, the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Olmstead decision, Social Roles, Peer Support, Self-Determination, Stigma, and Spirituality/Religion. Information on these topics can be found on the site at http://cmhpsr.med.upenn.edu/rrtc/index.html.

Contact the Collaborative at: pennrrtc@mail.med.upenn.edu
Telephone: 215-746-6713; Fax: 215-349-8715; TDD: 215-751-9655

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SELF-ADVOCACY AND SELF-CARE RESOURCES…

Elected Officials Can Help

Have you been hitting a dead end in your self-advocacy efforts? Try contacting your elected officials. Their offices can sometimes help you find a quick resolution to a problem. Your U.S. Representative and your two U.S. Senators have staff members who help address their constituents' concerns. Try contacting their local offices rather than their Washington offices. In many states, state legislators also have staff members who can help. Even if your officials can't help you with a particular problem right away, letting them know about your concerns can help raise their awareness of the issue and might influence later legislation. If you don't know who your elected officials are, visit http://www.vote-smart.org or call the county election board. The blue pages of the phone book also list contact numbers.

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Side Effects Serious Issue in Mental Health Treatment

More people than ever are being prescribed psychiatric medications, for a variety of symptoms, and a far greater percentage of prescriptions of being written by doctors who are not psychiatrists. Yet many are not aware of common side effects associated with their medications, and are unlikely to discuss these negative effects with their prescribers.

Side effects are important to bring up for many reasons, even if they are not very bothersome. Some medications have side effects which can develop into serious medical conditions. Recent studies have found that certain psychiatric meds, such as Olanzapine (Zyprexa), present a risk of Type II diabetes, a potentially life-threatening condition. Nearly all serious conditions arising out of prescription drug use, though, can be detected early and prevented with proper medical treatment.

It has been widely observed that side effects are the leading reason people stop taking medicines they've been prescribed. Yet many people find it difficult to discuss side effects with their physicians. Some feel that their complaints are too minor or that doctors will dismiss them. Certain side effects such as sexual dysfunction may be particularly difficult for individuals to bring up. A very real communication gap has arisen as a result, in which physicians don't know that their patients are experiencing side effects and patients feel their doctors are not willing to hear their complaints.

New programs and materials are available to help individuals bridge this communication gap and successfully address their side effect concerns with prescribers. A toolkit created by the National Mental Health Association entitled "Dialogue for Recovery" features suggestions for building communication with your doctor and a helpful side-effect checklist which can which copied and used monthly to help make good use of precious time with your prescriber. This booklet, created for the mental health consumer, is available as a free download from the NMHA website at
http://www.nmha.org/bookstore/freeDownloads.cfm.

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RESOURCES FOR CONSUMER-RUN ORGANIZATIONS...

Boston University Unveils New Repository of Recovery Resources

Boston University's Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation has unveiled their new Repository of Recovery Resources:
http://www.bu.edu/cpr/recovery/. Under the direction of William A. Anthony, BU's Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation has produced some of the finest academic work on the topic of recovery from mental illness. Anthony's work has been one of the driving forces behind the growing acceptance of the recovery paradigm in university settings

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where providers and bureaucrats are trained, and peer-reviewed academic journal articles are written. His writing has elaborated on the points brought up by the breakthrough longitudinal research from his Boston University colleague Courteney Harding, who documented how a large percentage of people have been recovering from Schizophrenia for some time now in spite of the unfair status quo of grim prognoses. Using Anthony and Harding's brilliant work as bedrock, the Center's staff has created an eclectic Repository of Recovery Resources. They are not consumers or survivors, but "they get it," so this is a vital website to find training tools, psychoeducational hand-outs and videos that go beyond a flimsy brochure, consumer stories, board or staff meeting rhetoric, and articles that can be cited in proposals. This repository is intended to be an on-going work in progress. Suggestions of additional recovery resources and feedback on the site are welcome. It's gotten off to a great start, but you can help them by suggesting more resources: http://www.bu.edu/cpr/recovery/suggest.html.

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PARC Corner - OLDER ADULTS AND MENTAL HEALTH...

The Positive Aging Resource Center is Looking for a Few Good Stories

The Positive Aging Resource Center (PARC) is welcoming nominations for "positive aging role models". A positive aging role model is someone who embraces aging with grace, enthusiasm, and vigor- someone who makes the best of everyday. Nominate a friend, a neighbor, or a family member. You can even nominate yourself. We are especially interested in hearing about older adults who have experienced and triumphed over a mental illness such as depression or an addiction.

These "success stories" or "positive aging role models" will be highlighted on the PARC website. We have already received several nominations, which will appear on our website, www.positiveaging.org. Look for "Rodger's Story," on the website.

If you are interested in sharing your story, please contact Noelle Downing, Director of Consumer Education at ndowning@partners.org.

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MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT AND SERVICES...

GlaxoSmithKline to Begin Posting Drug Trial Results

GlaxoSmithKline is going to post online results of clinical trials on its drugs starting with the release of approximately 65 tests on a diabetes medication "Avandia", starting in September.

GlaxoSmithKline has indicated that the database will include all tests
on drugs sold by the company since 2000. (In that year Glaxo Wellcome
merged with SmithKlineBeecham.)   GlaxoSmithKline's action is a step
forward, indicating drug producers' willingness to disclose data from
clinical trials, after stonewalling on the issue for years. Another
drug manufacturer, Eli Lilly, has also announced it will create a
public database of all its drug test results.