

The Key Update

The free monthly e-newsletter of the National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse

Volume 2 No. 2, August 2005

<<http://www.mhselfhelp.org>>

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RESEARCH...

Study Examines Effectiveness of Anti-stigma Programs

A recent study that considered the components of an effective anti-stigma program found that the key element was consumers' testimony about their experiences with mental illness and with a range of mental health services.

The study, published in the *International Review of Psychiatry*, reviewed the relevant literature and the results of the recent Mental Health Awareness in Action (MHAA) program in England. MHAA educated 109 police officers, 78 adults with no mental health training whose work involved providing supports to people with mental health problems, and 472 students ages 14 to 15. In addition, focus groups of consumers explored the impact of stigma on their lives, and expert opinion on anti-stigma strategies was solicited.

The personal testimonies of consumers were found to be central to changing attitudes about mental illness in every group studied. The authors conclude that the evidence base for involving consumers in anti-stigma programs is expanding and that more research will help to determine the most effective contexts for stigma change. However, they believe that programs to address fear, ignorance and prejudice must not just raise mental health awareness but must address behavior change as well.

Source: Pinfold, V., Thornicroft, G., Huxley, P., & Farmer, P. (April 2005). Active ingredients in anti-stigma programmes in mental health. *International Review of Psychiatry* 17(2): 123-131. An abstract is available at <http://journalonline.tandf.co.uk/link.asp?id=q0h1835205n61185>>

High Rate of Suicide among Physicians Studied

A recent article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* examining 25 previous studies of physician suicide found that female doctors commit suicide at a rate 130 percent higher than women who aren't physicians and that male physicians commit suicide at a rate 40 percent higher than men who aren't physicians.

Why is the rate of suicide dramatically higher among doctors? In an interview with the *Boston Globe*, Dr. Herbert Hendin, medical director of the American Foundation for

Suicide Prevention, suggested, “[Doctors] are less into attempted suicide; they’re more into successful suicide.” Dr. Luis Sanchez, director of the Physician Health Services in Massachusetts, told the Globe, “It’s embarrassing for a physician who is held up by society as an icon to admit that we may need help. We don’t want to admit we might have some faults or frailties.”

Some major teaching hospitals are now implementing programs designed to address the stigma that surrounds mental illnesses and that is believed to be central to the high prevalence of suicide in the medical community. For example, Brigham and Women’s Hospital is currently expanding efforts to reach doctors needing mental health care. These efforts include counseling as well as education designed to reduce the stigma of mental illness.

Dr. John Fromson, chairman of the American Psychiatric Association’s committee on physician health, told the Globe, “It’s about changing a culture of shame and blame to adopting a culture of safety, so that when doctors have a problem they feel they can talk about it.”

Source: Smith, S. Medical community begins to address physician suicide. Boston Globe. June 28, 2005.

<http://www.boston.com/yourlife/health/diseases/articles/2005/06/28/medical_community_begins_to_address_physician_suicide/>

HUMAN RIGHTS...

Jury in ECT Lawsuit Returns Verdict in Favor of Plaintiff

A South Carolina woman has become the first recipient of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT, also known as shock treatment) to win a jury verdict and a large monetary judgment in compensation for what it found to be extensive permanent amnesia and cognitive disability caused by the procedure.

Peggy S. Salters, 60, who reported losing all memories of the past 30 years — including all memories of her husband of three decades, now deceased, and the births of her three children — following an intensive course of outpatient ECT in 2000, sued Palmetto Baptist Medical Center in Columbia, as well as the three doctors responsible for her care. Salters held a master’s of science in nursing and had a long career as a psychiatric nurse, but also lost her nursing skills and was unable to return to work after ECT.

On June 17, the jury awarded her \$635,177 in compensation for her inability to work. (The malpractice verdict was against the referring doctor, Eric Lewkowicz. The jury could not return a verdict against the other two doctors because of one holdout vote for acquittal. The hospital settled its liability for an undisclosed sum early in the trial.)

The first lawsuit for ECT amnesia, Marilyn Rice v. John Nardini, was brought 30 years ago, and dozens of such suits have followed. While there have been a few settlements, including one for half a million dollars, no former patient has won a case until now.

Source: <<http://www.peoplewho.net/documents/ctip.ectverdict.htm>>

Hospital Pays Fine in Landmark Restraint Case

In what the U.S. Attorney's Office believes is the first settlement of its kind involving a hospital, Central Montgomery Medical Center in Lansdale, Pa., and its management company, Universal Health Services of Delaware, Inc., have agreed to pay the U.S. Government \$200,000 and to hire an independent consultant to review its restraint policy.

The case centered on the hospital's alleged improper use of restraints on 91 patients during a six-month period. These included an older woman who died of apparent suffocation after falling out of bed while attached by a vest restraint.

The 125-bed hospital did not admit any wrongdoing. The management company's attorney, Bruce Gilbert, told the Philadelphia Inquirer that the company would have fought the suit if it had not been "so complicated and so expensive."

Meanwhile, the U.S. Attorney's office heralded the settlement's broad implications. "This case and 20 years of research show that restraints can lead to tragedy, and we want to make sure providers use them [only] as a last resort," U.S. Attorney Patrick L. Meehan told the Inquirer.

Such cases are more common against nursing homes, where the use of restraints is more frequent.

Source: Smith, V.A., Wang, S. Hospital settles restraint case. Philadelphia Inquirer. July 26, 2005.

RESOURCES FOR CONSUMER-RUN ORGANIZATIONS & SELF-HELP GROUPS...

Transformation Institute In Consumer Studies to Be Held in August

The Transformation Institute in Consumer Studies: An Introduction to Evaluation Methods and Use will be held August 11-14, 2005, at Embassy Suites in Charleston, W. Va. The program is designed to build consumer skills and scholarship in evaluation basics -- including understanding, producing, and using evaluation information -- and consumer studies. It will be co-hosted by the Consumer Organization and Networking

Technical Assistance Center (CONTAC) and the National Empowerment Center (NEC), both peer-run/self-help national technical assistance centers that are funded by the Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. For information, contact Linda Edwards, coordinator, at 1-888-825-8324, or download the registration form and information at <<http://www.contac.org/>>

SELF-ADVOCACY AND SELF-CARE RESOURCES...

Book Presents 30 Years of Evidence Supporting Recovery

“In this first of two landmark volumes, ‘Recovery from Severe Mental Illnesses: Research Evidence and Implications for Practice,’ editors Larry Davidson, Courtenay Harding, and LeRoy Spaniol present over 30 years of accumulating evidence that challenges the long-held view that severe mental illnesses typically follow a deteriorating course. Supported through long-term outcome studies, personal accounts and articles, this book demonstrates that people with severe mental illnesses achieve higher levels of role functioning, adjustment, and subjective well-being than previously thought. Contributing authors include William Anthony, Patricia Deegan, Robert Drake, John Strauss, Mary Ellen Copeland, Kim Mueser, Luc Ciompi, and other prominent researchers and advocates in the field of psychiatric rehabilitation and recovery.”

Reprinted from the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation e-newsletter.

To learn more, visit <<http://www.bu.edu/cpr/catalog/books/titles/rsmi-1.html>>

PARC CORNER...

The Internet (Baby) Boom

Did you know that over 70 percent of adults from age 50 to 64 use the Internet? And did you realize that, as those people age, millions of Internet users will be over age 65?

There are many Web sites geared toward older adults but few sites are actually designed specifically for their needs. The PARC Web site, <www.positiveaging.org/consumer>, has been recently redesigned to be even more accessible and “senior-friendly.” The PARC Web site contains lots of information on mental health and staying healthy and active as you age. There are also links to other senior-friendly Web sites. Check out <www.positiveaging.org> for interesting information designed for older users.

Two other user-friendly sites for older adults are <www.mhaging.org> and <www.oacmha.com>.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

The National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse is seeking an Information Specialist.

Description: FT (37.5 hrs.) Responsibility for the provision of technical assistance materials to mental health consumers and consumer groups across the country, maintenance of an extensive library of educational materials, provision of training as requested, and participation in the development of ongoing Clearinghouse programming.

Qualifications: Bachelor's degree (B.A.) or equivalent; 3-5 years related experience and/or training or equivalent combination of education and experience. Experience in mental health arena and one or more of the following areas: customer service, social policy, public health or library science. Good oral and written communication skills required. Working knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite and Internet search skills desired. Training skills and knowledge of Spanish a plus. Consumers are urged to apply.

Contact Information: Please send resumes with cover letter to: Cheri Marranzini, Director of Human Resources, 1211 Chestnut Street, 11th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19107, or e-mail to: <mailto:cmarranzini@mhasp.org>. No phone calls please.

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Contact managing editor Shannon Flanagan at 215-751-1810 x281 or <mailto:sflanagan@mhasp.org>.