



WINTER 2003
Issue No. 7

This and That

Announcing...

From the PEPP Peer Support Group! "Journey to the Exterior" is a multimedia collection of art including poetry, photographs of art and a CD compilation of music and spoken word. Both the booklet and the art contained between its covers were produced by individuals experiencing psychosis. The booklets are \$20.00 each (plus shipping and handling).

Contact the PEPP Peer Support Group at: peppgroup4psychosis@hotmail.com
Proceeds go to support the activities of the PEPP Peer Support Group.

A reader suggests...

Julia Nunes and Scott Simmie's new book, "Beyond Crazy: Journeys Through Mental Illness" (McClelland & Stewart, 2002). The authors "take us beyond the barriers of fear and stigma to meet real Canadians from all walks of life who have encountered mental illness. They tell stories of what it is like to journey to the edge of the abyss and back again, of what it is like to suffer a deep psychosis or depression, a misdiagnosis, a life-threatening eating disorder, the suicide of a loved one. And they tell stories of hope recovered, of finding the road back to wellness, of families made stronger than ever". Find the book at your local library or book store.

Bulletin Board

HELP WANTED

Family to Family has received the following request...

"Looking for families and caregivers with experience of early childhood onset (before age 12) schizophrenia. Son recently diagnosed."

Childhood schizophrenia is a rare form of the disease: only 2% of individuals with schizophrenia experience its onset in childhood. While the focus of this newsletter is on first-episode psychosis, we'd like to help if we can.

If you can help, please contact Sharon (Editor) at slsm@escape.ca

family to family

FOR FIRST-EPIISODE PSYCHOSIS FAMILIES

Learning As We Go

For many of us this has been a long, cold winter and we are eagerly awaiting the arrival of seed catalogues in the mail.

But when I stop to think about it, I realize they're probably already posted on the Internet along with everything-you-ever-wanted-to-know-about-seeds and more!

Recently, I was introduced to the term "mental health literacy" and my first stop for further information was the web. As it turned out, the term "mental health literacy" was coined by an Australian psychiatrist, Anthony Jorm, in 1997. Mental health literacy is defined as "the ability to recognize specific disorders; knowing how to seek mental health information; knowledge of risk factors and causes, of self-treatments, of professional help available; and attitudes that promote recognition and appropriate help seeking."

The knowledge that you can gain from the Internet can help you

become more "mental health literate". It can help you learn what questions to ask and provide you with concrete examples of available services and recent developments in research and resources.

Both the information I found during my search of the web and the places that I found it, pointed the way to Issue 7 of the newsletter.

In a break from our usual format, we're devoting this issue to the topic of mental health literacy on the web. We present some of the more popular and reputable sites, accompanied by reviews provided by parents and youth. The reviews tell their own story: it seems the older and younger generations don't always agree! Surprised?

We're also pleased to introduce our "Bulletin Board" as a way for readers to connect with each other. Is there a question that you would like to post? Please contact the Editor.

Families can make a difference!

Sharon Scott, Editor

On-line Information: Fact or Fiction?

Just because a document appears on-line does not mean that it contains valid information. It is important to be sure of its source and accuracy. Some guidelines:

Consider the source

- Try to stick with sites sponsored by reputable organizations.
- Is an author and/or publisher named?
- Compare information on the same topic from different sites to see if they provide similar information.
- How well written is the article?
Is it grammatically correct?
Are there spelling errors?

How current is the information?

- On-line documents should include the date when they were written or when they were last updated. It's important to know the timeliness of the information, because newer information may exist elsewhere.

Remember that the Internet cannot replace the advice of your family's health care team.

- The knowledge that you can get from the Web can help you become more "mental health literate."

Top-notch psychosis sites with reviews

Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centre (EPPIC)

Melbourne, Australia

www.eppic.org.au

This site is an excellent starting point. Many of the materials can be downloaded from the site and others can be ordered. EPPIC's newsletter, "Early Psychosis News" is also available at this site.

Parent comments: This site has a wealth of information for both mental health professionals and families. It gives concrete examples of types of services which can be set up in city and rural settings and tells about recent developments in research and services; everything families need to know about early psychosis from A-Z; presented in plain language. Numerous resources available for order or download, including early psychosis Info. Sheets in English plus 6 other languages!

Youth comments: Exceptional! Great for people shopping for treatment possibilities.

Early Psychosis Intervention Program (EPI)

Fraser Health Authority, British Columbia

www.psychosissucks.ca

This web site offers easily accessible information on psychosis, treatment, associated problems, substance use and recovery.

"Psychosis Sucks" is also the identity of a public awareness campaign initiated by the Fraser Health Authority, Early Psychosis Intervention Program. This slogan is featured on posters, brochures, pocket cards, pens and suckers! (We'll talk more about this public awareness campaign in a future issue.)

Parent comments: Lots of easy to read information for the whole family. Found it very helpful that the links specify resources that are available for download from other sites. Extremely easy to read and access information; opportunity to subscribe to their newsletter.

Youth comments: Striking! Friendly, bright and easy to read. Great education for young people.

The Prevention and Early Intervention Program for Psychoses (PEPP)

London, Ontario

www.pepp.ca

PEPP is a community-focused early intervention program for psychoses, which combines service, research and education. Comprehensive site includes manuals for screening, assessment, treatment (available for download), information about a well-established family support network (and how to contact) and links to a variety of helpful web sites.

Parent comments: A bright and useful site for general information on early psychosis, as well as assessment and treatment procedure. Definitely a "must-visit" web-site about early psychosis; easy for families to navigate. It's all there...signs and symptoms, family support, education etc.

Youth comments: Exceptional! Great for worried parents and clinicians.

Early Psychosis Intervention Projects The Canadian Mental Health Association, National Office

Toronto, Ontario

www.cmha.ca

You can find resource materials on the Early Psychosis Intervention pages and also copies of *Family to Family* in both English and French. Also of interest are the "Higher Education" pages.

Parent comments: Extensive information about early psychosis available for download or order. Excellent opportunity to connect with other families (*Family to Family* newsletter) and learn more about how higher education can accommodate students recovering from mental illness.

Youth comments: Not cool but good for keepers. Interesting information and up to date. Very dense.

Initiative to Reduce the Impact of Schizophrenia (IRIS)

United Kingdom

www.iris-initiative.org.uk

This site provides information about early intervention, clinical guidelines, a tool kit, a News and Discussion Board and Questions and Answers.

Parent comments: Factual information about Early Psychosis Intervention Programs in the U.K.; opportunity for health professionals and families to ask questions and post messages on the Discussion Board. A great site! We give it two thumbs up. They provide a very useful table of contents. Enjoyed seeing the photos.

Youth comments: Wild colours! Not very informative. Nice to see photos.

Youth-friendly sites

get on top

A Guide to Mental Health – The Compass Strategy, Australia

www.getontop.org

This site for youth is easy to navigate and looks at depression, bipolar disorder, psychosis, substance use and other mental health problems. Each section includes facts about the specific problem, symptoms and types of treatment available. There is also a personal experiences section with stories from young people who have dealt with a mental health problem.

Parent comments: Very appealing site for young people wanting straight-forward information about psychosis; written in a youth-friendly style. Opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. I like that they give answers to common worries and concerns people have about seeking help. I also like the tips for families on how to encourage young people to get help, and general coping strategies for young people.

Youth comments: Fun. Entertaining. Short and to the point. Attractive.

Sheffield Early Intervention Service
United Kingdom

<http://users.medix-uk.com/day/home.html>

A site that just came to our attention! It is part of the U.K.'s National Health Service. The "What can I do to help myself" includes information about medication, voices, worrying ideas, keeping well, stress and getting on with your life. There is also a section "Help for Carers, Friends & Relatives" and "What the hell is psychosis anyway?"

Parent comments: Very youth friendly format which promotes successful early intervention and assertive case management model; helpful info and tips for client, caregiver, family and friends. Comments and feedback encouraged (message board and guest book). I absolutely love the "attitude" expressed by the Sheffield team - so positive and hopeful. You can feel their energy!

CyberIsle

Teen Net – University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario

www.cyberisle.org

This youth health site was developed with teens for teens. It is an interactive site all about young people and health issues, in a fun graphic style. Lots of links are provided to other sites about youth issues and health.

Parent comments: A simple log in procedure. I like that it's by teens for teens! We need to ask this site to include information about first episode psychosis!

Our Favourite Search Engine

Google

www.google.ca

Search engines are the most sophisticated, most comprehensive tool you can use to search the Net for information. Google is an excellent search engine for finding official information and popular sites. If you are looking for something on the web all you need to do is type in a few key words and click on the Search button. If you want to search for specific phrases, you can put quotation marks around the exact phrase.

*Not all search engines are created equal. Is there anything better than Google?
Let us know about your favourite search engines.*

Surfing mental health sites

Medscape www.medscape.com

Medscape is primarily oriented towards professionals but offers information on research findings that can be very useful for family members. There is a specific section focused on psychiatry and mental health. Registration is required to use Medscape but there is no cost involved.

Parent comments: I recommend Medscape as a tool for comprehensive research on psychosis. It will provide "weighty" material that is helpful for parents. Free service for health professionals and families to access current information about disease management, research, medications, etc. Don't be put off by the log-in procedure...it's quick and easy.

Youth comments: Don't like it for psychosis information.

MoodGym Centre for Mental Health Research, Australia www.moodgym.anu.edu.au

A web site that aims to help you identify and overcome problem emotions and develop good coping skills for the future so that you can enjoy good mental health. It's a free, fun, interactive program consisting of five modules which are designed to be completed in order.

Parent comments: Requires log-in procedure; offers an upbeat, interactive program addressing emotions, self-esteem, management of stress, anxiety, depression, etc.

Youth comments: An interactive site.

Internet Mental Health www.mentalhealth.com

This site was designed by a Canadian psychiatrist and offers a free encyclopedia of mental health information to improve the understanding, diagnosis and treatment of mental illness. You will find information on treatment, drugs and research.

Parent comments: Quick access to information about a variety of illnesses, medications, research.

Youth comments: Very user friendly. Attractive. Good for clients and family members. I liked the personal stories I can relate to. Information is to the point.

beyondblue

The National Depression Initiative, Australia
www.beyondblue.org.au

A very easy to use site to find out more about depression. The site includes a monitored bulletin board and regular on-line facilitated discussions with depression experts.

Parent comments: A very user friendly site with an easy reading level. It is simple and clear. Very helpful. In-depth information on depression for families.

We would like to Hear From You!

We are very interested in your ideas, comments, stories and suggestions regarding what you would like to see here. So if you'd like to share with us please contact...

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This newsletter was compiled by Sharon Scott and Brenda Wentzell with help from families across Canada.

This newsletter is intended as an additional source of information and support and does not replace the advice of your family's health care team. The views expressed in *Family to Family* are those of the contributors.

Our resources are limited and we are looking for sites in each province to assist with the distribution of this newsletter. If you are associated with an organization, agency or clinic that would find this newsletter useful for clients and could help by distributing a number of copies, please contact the Editor.

We also encourage everyone to photocopy and distribute this newsletter.

Family to Family is available for download in both English and French on the CMHA web site, <www.cmha.ca> Click "Education", click "Early Psychosis Intervention", click "Newsletters".

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We thank all of you who make this newsletter happen!