



### **MDSC/ Canadian Medical Association Anti-Stigma Project**

The Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) to develop and produce a one-hour continuing medical education (CME) web-based course on the stigma of mental illness and what individual physicians need to understand and actions to be taken to combat stigma, which occurs within their work environments and profession. CMA will reach out to its 72,000 members offering the course, which has the potential of delivering a multiplier effect on the rest of the health care provider community. The program is being developed in conjunction with Memorial University's Faculty of Medicine (PDCS) to ensure it meets the accreditation criteria of the College of Family Physicians Canada and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. This project is being financially supported by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, Bell, Health Canada, the Northeast Mental Health Centre and AstraZeneca.



### **Building Bridges**

In a major effort aimed at ensuring that the Canadian mental health care system responds appropriately to the needs of First Nation, Inuit and Métis people and mental health consumers, the MDSC—in partnership with the Native Mental Health Association of Canada – have been planning and collaborating on a series of major national initiatives over the past four years (2007 to 2011). To date the two national organizations and their national partners have developed a comprehensive planning framework on cultural safety, relational practice and social inclusion which will now allow them to deal more effectively with major systemic issues and barriers facing indigenous and non-indigenous communities such as: labelling and discrimination, colonialism, racism and stigma, and discrimination in a planned and progressive manner in the years ahead. As part of this foundational initiative, the two national organizations along with their national partners and the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Advisory Committee of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, have researched and analyzed cultural safety and cultural competence as it presents itself as a strategy to deal with identified inequities in health, education and social services. These initiatives have resulted in the development of a national framework for improving culturally and linguistically competent and safe services in mental health care for mental health consumers and Aboriginal peoples. In addition, these initiatives have served to investigate and determine which cultural and social institutions need to be restored or re-built in order to accommodate cultural safety.



## Mental Health in the Workplace

The MDSC understands that mental illness within the workplace is an area which needs to be addressed in this country. Mental illness causes more lost work days than any other chronic condition, costing the Canadian economy \$51 billion annually in lost productivity. In an effort to assist employers and staff learn more about maintaining mental health in the workplace, the MDSC offers an educational series on mental health for the workplace on our [website](#) and social media sites for Canadians to access. It is our hope that this informational series will provide information for stakeholders to take an informed look at their workplace and implement resources, policies and supports to improve the well-being of their staff and organizations.



## Resource and Support Dissemination

The MDSC prides itself on providing Canadians with relevant resources that offer important mental health information. Some of our most circulated resources are our trilogy of mental health [booklets](#): *What is Depression?* *What is Bipolar Disorders?* *Mental Health Quick Facts*. These three publications alone have seen a combined distribution of well over 250,000 hard copies and an equal amount of electronic downloads.



## Discussion Forum

The MDSC provides an online discussion [forum](#) for people who are experiencing mental health issues and their families to obtain support and information. This provides a safe place for people to share their experiences and concerns. With over 15,000 posts, our forum is one of the most widely accessed in Canada.



## Research

The MDSC has conducted an extensive amount of [research](#), for instance, “National and International Stigma Research Workshops”; “Wait Times for Psychiatric Patients in Hospital Emergency Rooms Across Canada”; in partnership with Health Canada, the development of the first “Report on Mental Illnesses in Canada 2003” and subsequently being the only mental health NGO to collaborate with Health Canada in the publication of “Mental Illnesses in Canada 2006 – The Human Face of Mental Illness” – the first major statistical report published by Health Canada on mental illnesses.

## Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Activities



**Elephant In The Room:** We have distributed over 20,000 blue elephants and supporting brochures for our national Elephant in the Room anti-stigma campaign. We also partnered with Montreal Walks for Mental Health and supported this awareness initiative through presenting each participant with an elephant and the Montreal Walks highlighted the MDSC involvement and promoted our campaign and anti-stigma work.



**Piano Concert Series:** We are engaged in an anti-stigma and awareness fundraising venture which will involve piano concerts. Shari Brownstein and Michael Costello (pianist, virtuoso) will host awareness concerts for the MDSC. The first concert will be held at the University of Guelph, on May 7th, and a second concert will be held at the University of Ottawa on June 4th. This supports our goals of promoting awareness of mental illness and will also assist us in reaching out to the youth. ([More](#))



**Social Media:** The need to reach out through social media has been a priority of the MDSC. In particular, engaging the youth of Canada in discussions on mental illness is crucial. Over the last five months, the MDSC has engaged the social media company Webs9 to assist our organization implement a social media strategy. During this time, we have created in-depth presences on both Facebook and Twitter. Reaction from the public has been very impressive. We are now offering resources on mental health through this format and have watched our efforts make substantial headway. Currently, we are reaching out to well over 1,300 persons on a daily basis and this reach is climbing weekly.

**Correctional Services of Canada:** The MDSC has been engaged by the Correctional Services of Canada, to develop a mental health training program and associated supports for front line staff of CSC. This project will provide mental health and employment assistance in the re-integration of persons to the community. The project will also include an ex-offender tool kit to support their success.

**Translation:** With the assistance of Canadian Heritage and the Government of Canada, The MDSC is currently in the process of developing a complete French website to provide persons experiencing mental health issues and their families with support and information in both official languages.