



Canadian Psychiatric Association
Association des psychiatres du Canada



News Release

New Mental Health Anti-Stigma Training for Health Care Professionals

Guelph, ON, March 5, 2012 - In a major initiative aimed at improving health care services to persons with mental illnesses, a new continuing medical education (CME) program is now available to support family physicians and specialists to combat the stigma of mental illness within the profession.

Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) and project partners and sponsors the Mental Health Commission of Canada, Bell, North Bay Regional Health Centre and AstraZeneca Canada have collaborated with the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Psychiatric Association and Memorial University to develop the web-based course on understanding and combating the stigma of mental illness. This program uses contact-based education, whereby a person who has experienced mental illness shares his or her personal story with others to help increase physicians' understanding of their needs. It also includes tools and resources to allow for the provision of physician services free from stigma.

People who suffer from mental illness typically have the extra burden of living with the stigma associated with the illness. Stigmatizing behaviours or attitudes are present among friends, family members, co-workers and health care providers. Research has shown that stigma is the single most significant factor in preventing Canadians with mental illnesses from seeking help and that the most important group to which the anti-stigma message needs to be addressed is health care providers.

The culmination of years of research, this innovative approach leverages the knowledge of a wide range of stakeholders, including persons with lived experience. The program has been accredited by the College of Family Physicians Canada and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

Dave Gallson, the Associate National Executive Director of MDSC, stated that the MDSC is very proud to lead this major national initiative and that the collaborative efforts and direct involvement of persons with lived experience and major stakeholders in the development of this CME will ensure improved health care provision for Canadians with mental health problems and illnesses; the constituency that MDSC serves.

Canadian Medical Association President, Dr. John Haggie states: *“There is little doubt that this groundbreaking national initiative will have a positive impact on the 77,000 members of the CMA and a large multiplier effect on other health care providers.”*

Mental Health Commission of Canada President and CEO Louise Bradley says, *“This program draws upon the most promising research shown to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness. It will have a major impact on breaking down one of the biggest barriers preventing many people from seeking treatment. Fighting stigma is a core aspect of the Commission’s mandate and we are excited to have shared our expertise on this matter.”*

Mary Deacon, Chair of Bell’s Mental Health Initiative, praised the collaborative efforts of the stakeholders involved and notes, *“We are pleased to support this important education program with all the partners which will help physicians treat people suffering from mental illness in environments free from stigma and will undoubtedly encourage more people to come forward to seek help. By supporting this program, Bell is building on its commitment to fight stigma and improve access through our Bell Let’s Talk mental health initiative.”*

The anti-stigma CME is available to CMA members and can be accessed through the following links:

English: www.cma.ca/stigma

French: www.amc.ca/stigmatisation

About Mood Disorders Society of Canada

Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) is a national, not for profit, consumer driven, voluntary health charity committed to ensuring that the interests of persons with mental illness, family members and caregivers are heard on issues relating to mental health and mental illness; and in particular with regard to depression, bipolar illness and other associated mood disorders. MDSC fulfills its mandate through an active partnership approach that engages like-minded organizations in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

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For further info:

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