Celebrating Dr. Northoff's EJLB-CIHR Michael Smith Chair

On October 22, 2009, Dr. Zul Merali, President and CEO of the IMHR brought together various stakeholders to recognize and jointly celebrate Dr. Georg Northoff's EJLB–CIHR Michael Smith Chair Award. Guests include various IMHR Board members, Dr. Bernard Jasmin, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa, Dr. Anthony Phillips, Scientific Director (SD) of CIHR’s Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction (CIHR-INMHA), Mr. George Weber, President and CEO, ROHCG, Timothy Kluke, President and CEO, ROFMH, Dr. Michel Chrétien, O.C, O.O., M.D., member of the EJLB Foundation Scientific Advisory Committee as well as Nathaniel Low-Beer Lewis, grandson of Edith Low-Beer, founder of EJLB Foundation.

This research Chair honors the memory of Dr. Michael Smith, a Canadian Nobel Laureate who was instrumental in setting up the Scholar Research Programme. The EJLB–CIHR Michael Smith Chair, awarded for a five (5)-year term, allows a Canadian university, or affiliated research institute, to attract to Canada a world-renowned scientist in neurosciences and mental health. Again, congratulations to Dr. Northoff for this important achievement! We are very proud to have you on board!

Mental Health Symposium - Minds Across Canada

On November 7, 2009, the Canadian Psychiatric Research Foundation and Mental Health Partnerships of Canada hosted a Mental Health Symposium titled “Open Minds Across Canada”. This symposium, which took place at the Associates in Psychiatry Auditorium of the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Center, featured several University of Ottawa IMHR researchers. The focus of this well-attended symposium was cutting-edge knowledge in the treatment and understanding of mental illness and, in particular, major depressive disorder. Dr. Georg Northoff, Research Unit Director of the IMHR Mind, Brain Imaging and Neuroethics Unit, holder of a Canada Research and Michael Smith Chairs, EJLB-CIHR Chair in Neurosciences, and Dr. Pierre Blier, Endowed Chair and Director of the IMHR Mood Disorders Research Unit, as well as Dr. Paul Albert, Senior Scientist in Neuroscience made presentations.

Canadian Academy of Geriatric Psychiatry Resident Award

The recipient of the Canadian Academy of Geriatric Psychiatry Resident Award for 2009-2010 is Andrea Bardell for her project “Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour in a Geriatric Population”, done in collaboration with Dr. Paul Fedoroff, Research Unit Director of the IMHR Forensic Unit and Dr. Tim Lau, Geriatric Psychiatrist. The award comes with a stipend of $2000 to attend the annual meeting and for academic materials. She will present her research project at the Canadian Academy of Geriatric Psychiatry Annual Meeting on August 31, 2010, in Montreal and will attend a dinner with the CAGP Board of Directors following the conference. This project is noteworthy as it involves collaboration between two disparate units: forensics and geriatrics.

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Dr. Zul Merali, President and CEO of the IMHR, provided the opening remarks, followed by Mr. Steven Lively who spoke of his experience with military service and mental health. Mr. Lively struggled for several years, not only with PTSD but with the stigma that accompanied it. He then joined the Operational Stress Injury Social Support (OSISS) program and in 2006 became a volunteer group facilitator with them. In that role, he worked towards helping fellow soldiers understand the complexities and stigmas associated with mental illness. In 2008, Mr. Lively began working with the Joint Mental Health Speakers Bureau, an initiative of Veteran Affairs Canada and National Defense.

This event also featured keynote speakers from Harvard & McGill Universities. Dr. Roger Keith Pitman, from Harvard Medical School, discussed new and emerging research-based treatment for PTSD. Dr. Pitman has been treating combat veterans and civilians with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for over 39 years, either during his active duty service in the U.S. Navy, his 30-year career with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), or his employment at the MGH. Dr. Pitman’s research into the psychobiology of PTSD spans more than 25 years. Over this time, he has studied combat veterans, nurses who served in the combat arena, women sexually abused as children, breast cancer patients, firefighters, police, and accident victims.

Dr. Alain Brunet, from McGill University, discussed PTSD and the translation of laboratory-based research to clinical application with respect to the role of memory processes in PTSD. He reviewed the scientific evidence involving propranolol, a beta-blocker which blocks the consolidation and reconsolidation of emotional memory. This research shows that beta-blockers may help “erase” traumatic memories when administered during recall of the traumatic memory (reconsolidation). Future directions and some of the implications for the field of Psychiatry were also discussed.

Dr. Jakov Shlik, Clinical Director of the Anxiety Disorders Program and Operational Stress Injury Clinic at the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre and Interim Director of the IMHR Stress and Anxiety Research Unit and Pam Jackson, Director of Patient Care Services, introduced the Operational Stress Injury (OSI) Clinic. The OSI Clinic provides specialized mental health services to Veterans, Canadian Forces’ members, eligible RCMP members, and their families experiencing problems due to work-related psychological trauma and stress. Clients are referred by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and the Department of National Defence (DND). An interdisciplinary team of psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, social worker, and external specialists enhance the services of the OSI Clinic.

Retired Armed Services member, Mike Estey, spoke of his experience with the military and mental health. Mr. Estey served in both Bosnia and Rawanda. In 1999, he was diagnosed with PTSD and with exceptional treatment, peer support and continued support of his chain of command, was able to continue his employment as a Signaler with his unit and ultimately redeployed to Bosnia. Upon his return to Canada, he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant until his medical release in 2006. During this period, Mike began to struggle with a new challenge – depression. This, along with his OSI, resulted in a six-month absence from and eventual return to his duties. This success was in large part due to the outstanding clinical support from the National Defence Medical Centre, (the OSISS program), and support from his chain of command and family. In April 2009, he was hired as the Regional Coordinator (vicinity of Québec) in support of the Peer Support Coordinators and the Family Peer Support Coordinators for the Province of Québec and the NCR.

Finally, to lighten this serious topic, Victoria Maxwell, a consumer and comedian presented a solo sketch centered on her personal journey with bipolar disorder, anxiety and psychosis. This play was a brave, funny exposé, about experiencing, surviving and coming to terms with mental illness. Victoria has worked for over 20 years as an actress and writer for both film and stage. Her one-person shows, Crazy for Life and Funny...You Don’t Look Crazy?! tour internationally and have garnered awards in both the United States and Canada. You will also find Victoria blogging for Psychology Today under ‘Crazy for Life: Escapades of a Bipolar Princess’.

The IMHR would like to thank Marilyn Prince, Executive Assistant to the President and CEO of the IMHR, and Learning and Development team for organizing this very successful day!
On Friday, November 6, 2009, Dr. Georg Northoff presented a lecture title “How is informed consent related to emotions and empathy? An exploratory neuroethical explanation”. Dr. Northoff presented results which suggest an empirical relationship between decision-making and informed consent on the one hand, and emotions and empathy, on the other hand. These results raise important neuroethical questions with regard to an emotional-social concept of informed consent and potential clinical implications for testing informed consent. Georg Northoff, MD, PhD, is EJLB-Michael Smith Professor for Neuroscience and Mental Health and holds a Canada Research Chair for Mind, Brain Imaging and Neuroethics at the University of Ottawa Institute of Mental Health Research (IMHR) and University of Ottawa Department of Psychiatry.

On November 20, 2009, Dr. David Kingdon, Professor of Mental Health Care Delivery at the University of Southampton, UK, delivered a special lecture “Advances In Psycholocial Treatment of Psychosis” This lecture discussed recent published findings, studies in press and on-going trials with respect to the development and evaluation of psychological treatments for psychosis. Information on work on cultural aspects and adaptations of CBT for psychosis to minority ethnic and majority – non-US/European – populations was also given. Finally, international treatment guidelines are now incorporating CBT for schizophrenia and these were briefly reviewed.

The University of Ottawa Institute of Mental Health Research (IMHR) presented this lecture as part of a series of public lectures which are free of charge. Reservations are required and lunch is provided to those who R.S.V.P. and stay for the lecture. For questions or comments about this lecture series, please contact Marilyn Prince at 613 722-6521, ext. 6551 or marilyn.prince@rohcg.on.ca.

**IMHR Sleep and Electrophysiology Platform**

The IMHR is delighted to announce that Drs. Alan Douglass and Verner Knott will co-direct the Sleep and Neuroelectrophysiology research platform recently launched. Their work will be complimented by collaborations from the accomplished Dr. Elliot Lee, Psychiatrist at the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre, and Dr. Joseph De Koninck, a University of Ottawa expert on sleep and dreams (Past Dean of Graduate Studies), past President of the Canadian Sleep Society (CSS) and a well-established figure in sleep research.

The Sleep Research Lab and Clinical Neurophysiology laboratory share the four rooms that serve as EEG procedure rooms during the day and as bedrooms for sleep research at night. There is also study carrel space for six graduate or honours students.

IMHR sleep research focuses mainly on depression and other mental illnesses as well as on the impact of medications on sleep. It has been known since the 1970s that dreaming (rapid-eye-movement or REM sleep) occurs earlier in depressed patients than normal controls. There is also more total REM time in the night, and more eye movements per minute in the REM sleep of depressed patients than in normals. Because the systems that control REM sleep in the animal brain are very similar to those of the human brain, we have learned a deal about the neurophysiology and neurochemistry of REM sleep in the last two decades.

For example, Dr. Douglass and a PhD student, Kathleen Biard, are currently probing the REM control system in humans with drugs that alter serotonin and acetylcholine, two neurotransmitters intimately involved in REM sleep. By using sophisticated mathematical analysis of the timing and number of eye movements, they hope to shed light on the cause of the large excess of REM sleep in depressed patients. If a reason can be found, it might assist in the search for the chemical basis of depression, or the mechanism by which antidepressants do their work.

The IMHR clinical neuroelectrophysiology unit works on a number of studies investigating relationships between brain and behaviour in neuropsychiatric disorders. Electrocencephalography (EEG) and event-related brain potentials (ERPs) are used as a 'window into the brain' while patients are being assessed for emotional and/or cognitive challenges. These electrophysiological measures are being used to probe whether they can act as markers of specific disorders such as schizophrenia, and as predictors of treatment response. For example, Dr. Knott is currently using these methods to probe auditory hallucinations in schizophrenia and the brain’s response to antidepressants and smoking-cessation pharmacotherapies.
Research Bootcamp Update - Second Workshop Announced

In partnership with the ROHCG, the University of Ottawa Institute of Mental Health Research (IMHR) has launched a series of dedicated workshops aimed at building on and expanding current research capacity and expertise within our organization. In the first of these workshops, on Tuesday, October 6, 2009, Dr. John Lyons (School of Psychology, University of Ottawa) made a presentation on Program Evaluation. By providing these workshops, we are initiating the first steps in support of the new Strategic Plan – Advancing Discovery.

It is envisioned that through this series of interactive presentations, interested staff (particularly clinical front-line disciplines) will be provided with tangible research skills that they will employ on a daily basis to carry out research-related activities.

IMHR Annual Report Now Online

Another successful year of research at the University of Ottawa Institute of Mental Health Research (IMHR) was marked by the production of the IMHR’s annual report. The IMHR’s mission is to create scientific knowledge to improve mental health and well-being locally and globally. The report outlines many of our accomplishments in 2008-09 that reflect this mission, as well as our move towards our vision of continuously improving mental health and well-being through leadership, collaborative discoveries and innovation in research, patient care and education. The report can be accessed via our website at: http://www.imhr.ca/about/annual-reports-e.cfm

30th Annual Academic & Research Day

The 30th Annual Research Day of the Department of Psychiatry, University of Ottawa and 13th Annual Y.D. Lapierre Resident Research and Academic Day took place conjointly on December 4, 2009, in the Associates in Psychiatry Auditorium at the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre (ROHMC). Faculty members, Psychiatry Residents and Fellows of the Department of Psychiatry, graduate students as well as all disciplines involved in mental health care and research participated. The program included scientific papers, poster presentations and lectures on a wide variety of topics. The winners of the annual IMHR Young Investigator Awards were announced. An official presentation of the awards will be made to the recipients at the Royal Ottawa Foundation for Mental Health Inspiration Awards. Further details will be provided in the next edition of the Breaking Through.

Announcements

The work of IMHR Senior Scientist Dr. Xia Zhang, and others including Dr. Braun, Director of the Institute of Biology at Otto von Guericke University in Magdeburg, Germany, was featured in a October 27, 2009 article in the Wall Street Journal. The article "This is your brain without dad", discussed how being brought up in a single parent environment might affect children's brain development.

Medscape, a part of the WebMD Health Professional Network, recently selected a paper by Dr. Pierre Blier and colleagues titled “Combination Antidepressant Therapy May Be More Effective for Major Depression Than Monotherapy” as their top psychiatry news of the week (December 23, 2009).
Recent Publications


Conference Presentations


Brookes, N. & Murata, L (2009). A vision of hope health and healing. Oral Presentation at the Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses hosted by the Nova Scotia Mental Health Nursing Interest Group

Brookes, N. (2009). Health, healing and hope: Mental health nurses and the environment Oral Presentation at the Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses hosted by the Nova Scotia Mental Health Nursing Interest Group


Recent Publications

Dillon-Samson, D. An intervention to promote hope, health and healing in a seniors’ mental health service. (2009). Poster Presentation at the Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses hosted by the Nova Scotia Mental Health Nursing Interest Group


Groholschi, R. Hope, (2009) health and healing through an innovative inpatient smoking cessation program on a schizophrenia unit. Poster Presentation at the Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses hosted by the Nova Scotia Mental Health Nursing Interest Group


Recent Publications


Murata, L. Brookes, N., & Tansey, M. (2009). Bringing the 10 Essential Shared Capabilities for the whole mental health work force across the ocean Oral Presentation at the Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses hosted by the Nova Scotia Mental Health Nursing Interest Group.

Murata, L., Antonello, C., Robertson, S., Silverman, M., Cotaras, C., Robertson, C., & Geis, C. (2009). A multidisciplinary, solution-focused diabetes education group for persons with mental illness Oral Presentation at the Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses hosted by the Nova Scotia Mental Health Nursing Interest Group

Ritchie, L. (2009).Hope for the future: A clinical innovation for advanced psychiatric nursing practice Oral Presentation at the Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses hosted by the Nova Scotia Mental Health Nursing Interest Group

Seto, M. C. (2009). “A picture is better than a thousand words”: What do we know about child pornography offenders? Plenary address presented at the 28th annual conference of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, Dallas, TX.


Tansey, M., & Strudwick, G. (2009). Post-graduate mental health nurse education: A pilot program in our province Oral Presentation at the Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses hosted by the Nova Scotia Mental Health Nursing Interest Group


Comments & Suggestions

The University of Ottawa IMHR welcomes any suggestions on improving our newsletter and making it more informative. To submit suggestions or material to appear in future editions of Breaking Through, please contact Dr. Owen Kelly, Research Associate, at 613.722.6521, ext. 6727, or by email at okelly@rohcg.on.ca.