



Schizophrenia Societies join forces on new mission statement to promote improved quality of life

The Schizophrenia Society of Canada and the Provincial Schizophrenia Societies across the country are proud to announce the launch of a new, joint mission statement that promotes improved quality of life for individuals and families affected by schizophrenia.

The new mission inspires the societies **to improve the quality of life for those affected by schizophrenia and psychosis through education, support programs, public policy and research.**

“This exciting new mission statement recognizes the significant changes in our understanding of and approaches to mental illness over the last 20 years,” said Chris Summerville, Interim Chief Executive Officer of the SSC.

“Today, the emphasis is rightly upon the possibility of recovery, not the mere reduction of suffering. Thus a shared mission statement more accurately reflects the purpose of the work of the schizophrenia societies across Canada,” Mr. Summerville said. “It represents our shared passion to advocate for mental health services that are recovery oriented and enhance quality of life, that advance the needs, rights and abilities of people living with and affected by schizophrenia and psychosis.”

The new statement expands beyond symptom reduction alone to promote the fact that there is hope for individuals and families to improve their quality of life. It integrates the importance of medical and psychiatric treatment to achieve maximum symptom relief and control with the myriad of other health, social and economic factors that can also add to a person’s quality of life, including but not limited to: community-based psychiatric rehabilitation with access to psychological support services; peer support; family education; safe and affordable housing; adequate income security; meaningful work; court diversion programs and mental health courts.

Quality of life and recovery are very individual, noted SSC President Michael Thomson. “The new mission statement incorporates that individuality and it promotes the idea of working towards a quality of life and recovery level that is possible and appropriate for each individual.”

The focus on the individuals and their quality of life is particularly meaningful for many impacted by the illness.

“I think the new mission statement is more proactive,” said 24-year-old Tammy Lambert of Winnipeg, Manitoba, who was diagnosed 10 years ago. “It doesn’t focus on symptoms alone; it focuses on the future and it gives people hope that they may be able to achieve a better quality of life.”

“As parents of a son who is living with schizophrenia, we welcome this new mission statement and its broader emphasis on the person rather than the illness,” said Dennis and Amy Butcher. “It conveys the hope and the opportunities that exist for many individuals – with the right supports and services – to return to a quality of life that is meaningful and fulfilling.”

The adoption of a shared mission also enhances the societies' ability to speak with one united voice on behalf of those affected by the illness.

“As we promote the work of our societies, both individually and together, the shared mission statement enables us to promote the same message across the country and this will be a significant advantage in our ongoing efforts to educate, raise awareness and reduce the stigma and misperceptions that abound about schizophrenia,” said Mr. Summerville.

Schizophrenia is a serious biochemical brain disorder characterized by delusions, hallucinations, disturbances in thinking and emotional and social withdrawal. Statistics show that one person in 100, or about 300,000 Canadians, will experience an episode of schizophrenia in their lifetime.

The Schizophrenia Society of Canada and the 10 Schizophrenia Societies across the country work independently and together to improve the quality of life of those affected by the illness through education, public policy, support and research.

Date: April 2007