Neuropsychology: Understanding Cognitive Problems in Mental Illness

SUBMITTED BY Dr. Karen Chipman, neuropsychologist

“Imagine for a moment what it would be like to wake up one morning and be unable to think clearly, concentrate and remember new information. You go to work eager to be productive but are unable to concentrate and after awhile, your boss gets upset with you for not completing assignments and forgetting things. People seem to be speaking rapidly and you become unclear about what they said or what they want… You begin doubting your abilities and your perception of the world around you… These are some of the things that may happen when individuals experience cognitive problems associated with serious psychiatric disabilities.” (Stone, 2012)

Difficulties with thinking skills are common for many people who have a psychiatric illness (e.g. Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder, Major Depression, etc.). In fact, these difficulties often contribute to the issues that bring people into mental health treatment, because of the effect that they can have on relationships, school or work performance, and other aspects of day-to-day living. However, cognitive deficits tend to be overlooked in people with mental illness and can get in the way of treatment or recovery unless steps are taken to understand what the deficits are and change how they are handled.

A neuropsychological evaluation can help with this by providing information about a person’s cognitive strengths and weaknesses, and identifying cognitive (e.g. memory) strategies that may make it easier for the person to benefit from treatment and function in everyday life. This type of evaluation can be requested through the Neuropsychology Service in the CHAMHP, which is comprised of a two-person team, headed by Dr. Karen Chipman since 2005. Alongside her colleague, Shirley Munk (who is the psychometrist that administers cognitive tests to clients), they provide neuropsychological evaluation services to both inpatient and outpatient programs affiliated with the CHAMHP.

What is a neuropsychological evaluation?

A neuropsychological evaluation looks at a person’s level of ability in several areas (e.g. intelligence, attention, memory, language, academic skills, visual spatial skills, planning, and problem solving skills). It usually requires several hours of the client’s time, consisting of interviews, testing, and feedback meetings. The findings are combined with many sources of information to assess cognitive changes, make helpful client-centered predictions, and offer practical recommendations to patients, families, and mental health teams.
Quality Matters
SUBMITTED BY the CHAMHP Quality Council

This year’s CDHA Quality Summit has been announced and will be taking place throughout the day on May 29. The theme is "Systems Change, Our Focus Doesn't: Quality for those we Serve".

Quality teams, committees, services, physicians and staff are encouraged to share your quality improvement work during this event either through an oral presentation or poster submission. Please note, oral presentations will also be taking place throughout the year at CDHA lunch and learns, as there are limited slots for this particular event.

Some important dates to note are as follows:
- Friday, May 2: Deadline for Oral Presentation submissions
- Friday, May 16: Deadline for Poster Fair submissions

For additional information on submission criteria, please visit the Quality Summit webpage at: http://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/performance-excellence/quality-week. For more information, or if you require assistance with a submission, please contact Laura Ankcorn, Quality Leader for CHAMHP, at laura.ankcorn@cdha.nshealth.ca.

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Neuropsychology...

How can a neuropsychological evaluation help clients with mental health?

- It can provide assistance with psychosocial rehabilitation and treatment planning.
  - This involves identifying cognitive strengths and weaknesses, as well as cognitive (e.g. memory) strategies, to help address housing, education, and employment issues.
  - Common questions include determining the kinds of accommodations or supports that may be needed to help people meet their daily living needs and function as best as they can in a school and/or work setting.

- It can provide assistance with differential diagnosis of dementia.
  - This involves determining whether cognitive changes among older adults with a psychiatric history are due to normal aging: the effects of their mental illness (e.g. depression), or the onset of Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) or dementia.
  - Common questions include distinguishing dementia from depression in clients with a history of mood disorder, or monitoring disease progression among individuals with MCI who are at high risk of developing dementia.

Have you heard about the Memory for Life research project?

Dr. K. Chipman offers a 10-week memory training group to older adults with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) and their support persons (e.g. family members or friends). This group was developed as part of a research project funded by the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation. Participants learn and practice strategies to help them address ways of managing day-to-day memory issues, including how to remember appointments, learn people’s names, remember passwords or PINs, and keep track of personal belongings.

If you would like to refer a client with suspected or diagnosed MCI to this study, please contact Dr. K. Chipman at 464-6059, or Caila Aube at 464-3434.

How can you request a neuropsychological evaluation in the CHAMHP?

Please contact Dr. K. Chipman at 464-6059, or Shirley Munk at 464-6173.
The Alonso Award for Excellence in Psychodynamic Group Therapy

Dr. Jackie Kinley and Dr. Sandra Reyno, of the Mental Health Day Treatment Program, received an award from the American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA): The Alonso Award for Excellence in Psychodynamic Group Therapy for "Attachment Style Changes Following Intensive Short-term Group Psychotherapy". The award was presented during the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health Luncheon in Boston on March 8, 2014.

Congratulations Drs. Kinley and Reyno!

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**Behavioural Family Therapy**

5 Day Training Course

Monday, May 12—Friday, May 16

Cobequid Community Health Centre

- Do you work with people living with long-term mental illnesses?
- Do you know how to work with families to promote recovery, reduce stress and prevent relapse?
- Have you considered BFT training? BFT will build on your clinical skills. It is a CBT, evidence-based program to improve communication, coping skills of families and has been shown to reduce relapse rates and stress within the family.

This 5-day course will prepare you to provide BFT to at least two families—circle of support (including the person living with mental illness) per year.

You will be supported in developing your BFT skills through monthly peer supervision sessions.

Learn more about the approach or it’s relevance to your work.... Talk to colleagues who have been trained in BFT or feel free to contact one of the facilitators.

If you are interested in this training opportunity, please discuss with your manager, complete an application form and return it to Cheryl Billard before April 14.

Facilitators are: Angela Naugle, JamieLee Liddell, Cheryl Billard, Lianne Nixon and Jenna MacKinnon. Please feel free to contact anyone of the facilitators for more information.

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**Psychiatry News!**

The Dalhousie University, Department of Psychiatry, and the Capital Health Addictions and Mental Health Program would like to welcome Dr. Mahmoud Awara, MRCPsych. Dr. Awara comes to us from South Essex, England, where he worked as a general adult consultation psychiatrist for the past seven years.

Dr. Awara will be joining the Recovery and Integration team, splitting his time between Simpson Landing and the Dartmouth Hub. He starts on April 1, 2014. He is also an assistant professor with the Dalhousie University, Department of Psychiatry.

Welcome, Dr. Awara!
Our Voice

Renovations Completed at the AJL Gym
SUBMITTED BY David Pilon and Denise LeBlanc

The renovations to the Abbie Lane Gym have been completed. Flooring has been repaired and refinished, new recreation lines have been painted and the wall surrounding the stage was dry-walled and freshly painted.

A ribbon cutting ceremony, with cake, was held on March 10 to celebrate the completion of the project.

A huge thank you is extended to the QEII Foundation whose generous support made this project possible, and to Barbara Hall for her support. Also, thank you to Doriano Sablone, engineering services, for organizing this project and ensuring it was completed on schedule.

For more information on scheduled activities, please contact Denise LeBlanc at denise.leblanc@cdha.nshealth.ca.

“Understanding Addictions and How We Can Help”
SUBMITTED BY Derek Leduc, manager, Concurrent Disorders Program


This series is one of many initiatives within the Capital Health Addictions and Mental Health Program focused on achieving the Provincial System Level Standards for Concurrent Disorders. The standards indicate that we should build capacity with our community partners, which include identifying training needs, facilitating educational opportunities to increase understanding of concurrent disorders, and the evaluation of each training initiative.

Community partners from across the district who work with individuals with substance use or concurrent disorders were invited to the workshop. There were 40 participants from various organizations, including the Out of the Cold Winter Shelter, Hepatitis Society, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canadian Mental Health Association, Veterans Affairs Canada, Department of Community Services, Laing House, Phoenix Youth, Provincial Child Welfare, Brunswick Street Mission, Sharing and Caring Social Club, and many others.

The purpose of the workshop was to increase knowledge of addictions and current disorders, explore the negative impact of stigma and discrimination, learn about the Capital Health Addictions and Mental Health Program, and to determine how our Program can work more collaboratively with our community partners.

Mental Health Minute
In case you didn’t catch the Mental Health Minute on CTV News at 5 this month, here are the links to the videos:

- March 4, Dr. Jason Morrison, psychiatrist, on early diagnosis when it comes to psychosis: http://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=300857
- March 11, Dr. Rebecca Boehm on recognizing when a bad habit has become an addiction: http://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=309300
- March 18, Jan Palmer, clinical dietician, talking about healthy eating and its impact on mental health: http://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=305236
- March 25, Neal Henderson, social worker, talking about learning the importance of setting goals: http://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=313330
Upcoming Events and Education Sessions

Tuesdays, 12:15—1:30 pm
**Inter-professional Education Sessions**
Hugh Bell Lecture Hall, NSH (available via Telehealth)
♦ April 1—Dartmouth Community Mental Health, Dr. Paul Freeman
♦ April 8—Psychiatry, Dr. Michael Butterfield (resident)
♦ April 15—Mobile Crisis/Psychiatry Emergency Services
♦ April 29—Sleep Disorders Program

Wednesdays, 8:30—9:30 am
**QEII Academic Rounds/Dalhousie University Rounds**
AJL, Room 4074 (available via Telehealth)
♦ April 2—Child & Adolescent, Dr. Lorraine Lazier & Nancy Ceulemans
♦ April 9—FORBOW Project, Dr. Rudolf Uher
♦ April 16—University Rounds: Dr. Alison Steier, Harris Institute, Phoenix, AZ
♦ April 23—Borderline Personality Disorders Treatment Program, Dr. Deborah Parker
♦ April 30—Centre for Emotions and Health, Dr. Allan Abbass

Friday, April 25, 2014, 8:00 am—4:30 pm
**XXV W.O. McCormick Academic Day**
The Lord Nelson Hotel, 1515 South Park St., Halifax
Theme: Addictions and Mental Health
For more information or to register, visit [https://www.esourceevent.com/McCormickAcademicDay](https://www.esourceevent.com/McCormickAcademicDay).

Thursday, May 1, 2014
**Get the Dope on Dope**
NSCC Waterfront Campus, 80 Mawiomi Place, Dartmouth
A community conversation about prescription drug abuse. With this in mind, the Nova Scotia Child and Youth Care Workers Association is pleased to invite you to a day dedicated to the topic. Keynote speaker: Detective Steve Walton (Ret.). Registration fees include lunch and coffee breaks. For more information, visit [www.nscycwa.com](http://www.nscycwa.com).

May 8—10, 2014/May 11, 2014
**Introduction to Clinical Hypnosis Workshop/Intermediate Hypnosis Workshop**
Seaview Manor, 275 South St., Glace Bay, NS
Sponsored by Atlantic Division, Canadian Federation of Clinical Hypnosis (CFCH). To register, contact Dr. Maureen Gorman at 902-466-0469 or [ggpsychservices@eastlink.ca](mailto:ggpsychservices@eastlink.ca).

Wednesday, May 28, 2014, 1:30—8:30 pm
**District Department of Family Practice and Primary Health Care Spring Forum**
NSCC Waterfront Campus, 80 Mawiomi Place, Dartmouth
Information Booths/Presentations, 1:30—5:30 pm
Family Physician Dinner Meeting, 5:30—8:30 pm
Please register by May 23. For more information, please visit [www.ddfp.ca](http://www.ddfp.ca) or call 902-454-7107.

Topics of Interest

In partnership with industry leaders including the Mental Health Commission of Canada, The Schizophrenia Society of Canada, Canadian Mental Health Association, Bell Canada, Morneau Shepell, Otsuka, Lundbeck Canada, Connex Ontario and CAMH this campaign will advance the conversation around mental health issues with an emphasis in the workplace, including depression, stress and anxiety – it will explore the National Standard on psychologically healthy and safe workplaces and its significance in maintaining a healthy and productive workplace.

The campaign will be distributed in the centerfold of the National Post reaching 420,000 readers, with a national digital site that goes live the same day, receiving wide readership through social media and our partnering leading new sites.

Please visit the website at: [http://mentalhealthnews.ca/](http://mentalhealthnews.ca/)

Newsletter Submissions

Our Voice provides a forum for the exchange of information, ideas and items of general interest to the staff of the Capital Health Addictions and Mental Health Program and our community partners.

The next issue of Our Voice will be distributed on April 24, 2014 with the deadline for submissions to be April 14, 2014.

Please send all submissions to [patricia.dauphinee@cdha.nshealth.ca](mailto:patricia.dauphinee@cdha.nshealth.ca).