



Newsletter-September 2nd, 2014

A. A Website under construction

Your need of shared resources is heard. The Working Group has decided to build a website that will provide community resources, updates about educational events related to mental health and a platform for partnership. If you are interested in helping with this BIG project, or you have any suggestion about the content, please let us know.

B. June 14th Seminar

We want to thank Susan Barrington from Bramlea Baptist Church and Owen Alton from Restore Canada who shared their work with us on June 14th, 2014. A lot of you have provided great feedback on the presentations. Enclosed please find the powerpoint slides of Owen's presentation.

After the presentation, participants broke into 3 groups to share their views on stigma against mental illness, church responses to mental health needs, and the barriers to and promoters of mental health ministry in the church setting. Below is a summary of the feedback on each question.

Question 1 : How significant are mental health issues in your congregation, and how (and how adequately) is your church handling the mental health issues thus far?

- The issue is significant
- Cultural specific stigma (e.g. Chinese stigmatized mental health issues as a shame to the family) prevented family and individuals seek help

- There is visible and invisible need of the individual, need to know how to identify them, then can develop strategies in meeting the need
- The fear from individual living with mental illness prevented them from reaching out; fear of being isolated or labelled
- Small church cannot respond to huge need
- Liability issues is a concern

Question 2 : What are the barriers and promoters of addressing mental health issues in your congregation?

Barriers :

- Pastors/ministers' own burden and need
- Stigma
- Financial burden adding onto the church
- Liability issues (e.g. sued by family in case of suicide)
- Question if church is able to provide mental health services ?
- Not sure where to refer people with need beyond what church can provide
- Ministers are reluctant to respond

Promoters :

- address it as a team (pastors, caregivers, church members, leaders) instead of putting the burden on a few people

Question 3 : Are there any endeavours to address mental health issues already (previously/currently/under planning) in existence in your congregation, and outcomes (if applicable)?

- None of the groups discussed this question

Question 4 : Any suggestions on how to address the issue of stigma in your congregation/faith community in general?

- Provide support groups
- Connect with Outreach teams to receive education and understanding about mental illness
- Address mental illness from the pulpit
- Address mental health in prayer meetings and Bible study
- Partner with mental health agencies to help individual re-integrate into church after treatment

Question 5 : What are the educational needs of spiritual care professionals (church ministers, elders/deacons, and other church leaders) regarding mental health issues? Any suggestions on how best to address the educational needs?

- Education begins in the seminary : Youth programs, counselling, MDiv students should all receive education on mental illness
- Ongoing training for seminary grads on dealing with mental illness in a church setting
- Provide Mental Health First Aid training in church
- Building resources for church and make it available

- Continue hosting symposiums and seminars, such as the symposium hosted by the Working Group in November 2013 and seminar like today

Question 6 : What care supports (as in "care for the caregiver") as distinct from education needs, have been found to be lacking for those individuals who engage in mental health related ministry (to stave off compassion fatigue and burn-out)? What care supports have been found to be useful?

- None of the groups discussed this question

Question 7 : What needs to be built-in from the get-go to ensure the ministry's sustainability?

- partnering with other organizations or churches such as Restore
- get ministers and pastors involved
- partnerships to build network and support
- ongoing evaluation of need
- tap into youth programs in church who are more open to discussion and receptive to change

Question 8 : What seminar or symposium topics related to mental health in Christian communities would you like the Working Group to address in the future?

- Diversify languages and ethnic needs
- Youth
- Outreach to families
- Have Christian professionals speak at symposiums

- How to engage mental healthcare professional in discussions
- Resources for churches
- Raise awareness
- Provide more education
- Invite people in recovery to speak and celebrate
- Addressing Liability to church providing mental health ministry
- A workshop for Christians who are suffering from mental illnesses

On behalf of the Working Group, we thank you for your continuous support of our education events. We look forward to seeing you in the near future.

Working Group for the Promotion of Mental Health in Faith Communities