



The Mental Health Information Centre of South Africa (MHIC) & the MRC Unit on Anxiety & Stress Disorders: Annual Newsletter



- SA's Mental Health Awareness Initiative
- Brain Awareness Week March 2014
- Mental Health Awareness Month 2014
- Research at the MHIC / MRC Unit on Anxiety & Stress Disorders
- Congratulations
- Awards

2014

In this newsletter we will once again be reporting on our activities of 2014 and also on the various research studies at the MRC Unit on Anxiety and Stress Disorders.

Several campaigns such as Brain Awareness Week (March), SU Wellness Open Days (July), and the SU Community Interaction Symposium (September) were some of the highlights this year. October is mental health awareness month and one of the busiest months at the MHIC. Activities during this period included various radio talks and the spreading of information via newspapers and magazines. (More information on some of these activities follows.)

The database of mental health professionals continues to be a useful resource for those who are looking for help. The database has grown considerably, but we are still working towards getting as many mental health professionals as possible to register themselves. This can be done by going to www.mentalhealthsa.org.za and clicking on 'mental health professionals' and 'register'.

The MHIC call centre was kept busy throughout the year and remains a helpful contact point from where we supply information and do referrals to mental health professionals and organisations countrywide.



Contact details are:

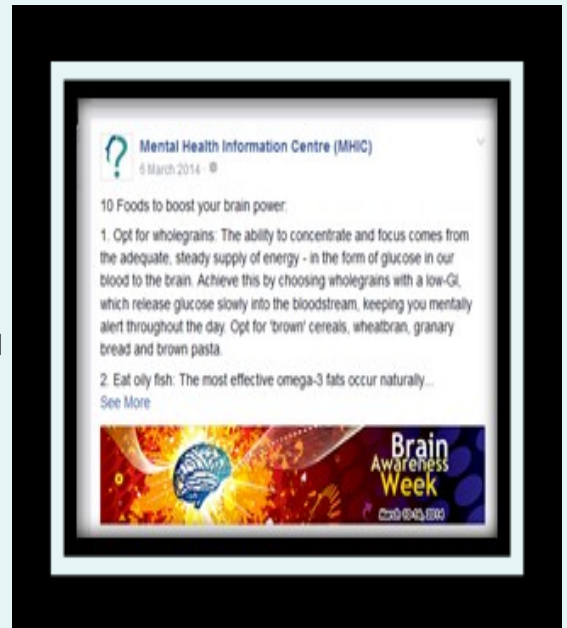
021 939 9229 or mhic@sun.ac.za

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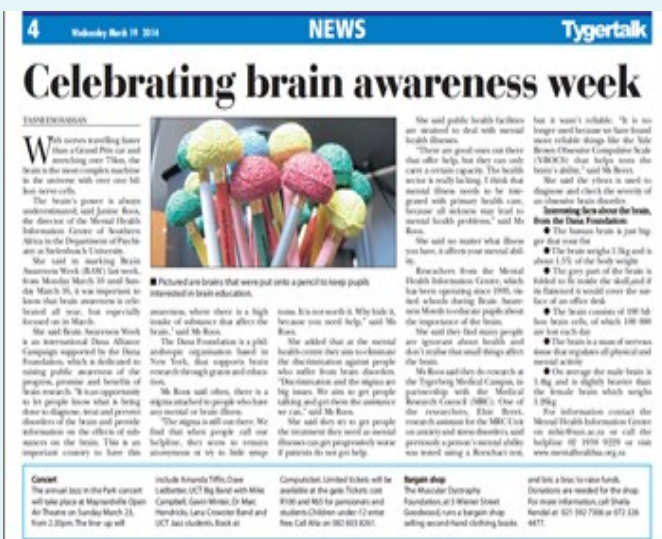
Awareness Activities of 2014

Brain Awareness Week (BAW) is the global campaign to increase public awareness of the progress and benefits of brain research. Every March, BAW unites partner organisations worldwide in a 'Celebration of the Brain'. Activities are limited only by the organisers' imaginations and include open days at neuroscience labs, exhibitions about the brain, lectures on brain-related topics, social media campaigns, displays at libraries and community centres, and more. The 2014 campaign was held worldwide from 10 to 16 March. For the 2014 BAW campaign the Mental Health Information Centre of Southern Africa (MHIC) posted daily brain facts and brain health tips on Facebook (www.facebook.com/mentalhealthsa) and our website. Information about BAW and a lecture about 'Traumatic Memory' was given to 3rd year Health Science students.



3rd year students with their booklets from the DANA Alliance and mental health brochures from the MHIC.

The MHIC furthermore had a fair amount of media contact during BAW 2014. Several radio talks were given about different brain-related topics. Information was also shared via community newspapers.





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Also for **Mental Health Awareness Month** the MHIC joined the **Hope Hike** on 12 October 2014 and distributed mental health brochures at this event.

THE HOPE Hike

*Fight depression!
Break the silence!*

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
pharma dynamics
EFFECTIVE AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE

IN AID OF THE ITHEMBA FOUNDATION

GAUTENG **CAPE TOWN**
SUNDAY SUNDAY

World Mental Health Awareness Month
UNESCO has declared October World Mental Health Awareness Month and 10 October as World Mental Health Day.

Play your part in raising awareness around mental health, specifically depression – the illness without a face – by wearing a depression awareness ribbon. The colour of the ribbon is sky-blue because blue is the colour of optimism, peace, positivity, tranquillity, calmness – and HOPE. Beaded “Sky-blue for Hope” ribbons can be bought at R30 each, the funds going towards the Ithemba Foundation for research on depression. Order your ribbons through the Ithemba website.

THE HOPE HIKE

Depression is not about “feeling down” and will not disappear by “just pulling yourself together”. It is a medical condition, and as with other medical illnesses, it requires treatment and medication. For various reasons, it is still an illness which is not spoken about openly in society. As with other illnesses, awareness campaigns should also help to break the silence. You can make a difference – join us on the **HOPE HIKE**. Through depression awareness, we might reduce the number of victims, and see more victors.

The Hope Hike is sponsored by Pharma Dynamics, supplier of generic medicines that work on the central nervous system. Funds raised go towards the Ithemba Foundation (www.ithembafoundation.org.za; ithemba means hope) to support research into depression. For information on depression and anxiety, go to www.letstalkmental.co.za.

If you have lost a loved one to depression, you may find some comfort in a “cyber retreat” on www.survivorsofsuicide.org.za.

HUIS VOL DRIM

Textbook of Psychiatry

The Textbook of Psychiatry focuses on the most important aspects of recognising and treating common psychiatric disorders relevant to psychiatric practice in South Africa. The 3rd edition has been revised to keep abreast of new developments in the field, providing updated information in keeping with the current evidence base. The authors have combined their knowledge of the literature together with their own clinical experience, presenting in each chapter a concise overview of the most important aspects of the topic. The book incorporates the recently revised Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) and is an excellent resource for both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Emsley, Pienaar & Seedat
R450
ISBN: 978-0-620-63753-4

Available from Mandy Harck 021 9389023 or mji@sun.ac.za

During 2014 the MHIC assisted with the updating of the **Textbook of Psychiatry** which incorporates the revised DSM-5. The Textbook can be ordered from the MHIC.

Contact Janine Roos at the MHIC on **021 938 9229** or send an e-mail to mhic@sun.ac.za if you are interested in obtaining a copy of the Textbook of Psychiatry 3rd Edition.

**FREE
MOVIES**



World Mental Health Month October 2014

Free movies for all registered US students 29 Sept—5 Oct

Commemorate *World Mental Health Month* with the
Centre for Student Counselling and Development
(CSCD) & PULP Cinema Neelsie:

**Come free up your thinking about
Mental Health issues**

CINEMA 2					
		12.30pm	3.00pm	6.00pm	9.00pm
	MON	Perks of Wallflower	K-Pax	~ Private Event ~	American Beauty
	TUE	K-Pax	Annie Hall	American Beauty	Perks of Wallflower
	WED	~ Private Event ~	Perks of Wallflower	K-Pax	Annie Hall
	THU	Annie Hall	American Beauty	~ Private Event ~	K-Pax
	FRI	American Beauty	K-Pax	Annie Hall	Perks of Wallflower
	SAT	Perks of Wallflower	Annie Hall	K-Pax	American Beauty
	SUN	Annie Hall	American Beauty	Perks of Wallflower	K-Pax

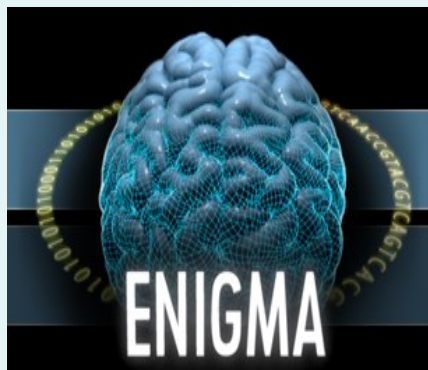
The MHIC distributed brochures on mood- and anxiety disorders at the PULP film festival

SU/UCT MRC Unit on Anxiety & Stress Disorders

Research activities in 2014

Enhancing Neuro Imaging Genetics through meta-analysis

The ENIGMA Network brings together researchers in imaging genomics, to understand brain structure, function, and disease, based on brain imaging and genetic data.



The SU/UCT MRC Unit on Anxiety and Stress Disorders forms part of this group of researchers and will be combining data here with that of other groups around the world.

More information about this and about participation in this initiative can be obtained from Dr Odile van den Heuvel OA.vandenHeuvel@vumc.nl and Prof Dan Stein Dan.Stein@uct.ac.za

State-of-the-art research on gambling disorder

The SU/UCT MRC Unit on Anxiety and Stress Disorders is conducting an innovative research study on gambling disorder. Prof Christine Lochner and her team are looking for participants for this study. For many people, gambling is harmless recreational fun. At least 50% of South Africans gamble in casinos, at slot machines, online, by playing the lottery or by betting on sports. However, it does become a problem for some when they start spending too much time and/or money on gambling. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey of 2012, 4-7 % of the adult population in South Africa are problem gamblers, whereas approximately 1% of the population suffers from gambling disorder. Problem gamblers who find it increasingly difficult to resist the urge to gamble even though they are experiencing negative consequences, such as financial and/or relationship difficulties, might be suffering from gambling disorder (sometimes referred to as gambling addiction).

Gambling disorder is a psychiatric disorder characterised by the uncontrollable urge to gamble despite serious consequences. Individuals with gambling disorder may continually chase losses, hide their behaviour, tell lies about where they go, how much they spend or owe, accumulate debt or even resort to fraud or theft in order to continue gambling. This condition is severely debilitating, disrupting the gambler's functioning in the personal, familial and/or occupational sphere.

The study covers many aspects of gambling disorder – symptoms, illness severity and impact on the quality of life, while also looking at genetics and the structure of certain brain regions implicated in this condition. The research team is looking for persons with gambling disorder or with problems related to their gambling behaviour and for healthy control persons (for comparison) who are interested to take part in the study. **For further information**, please contact: Prof Christine Lochner, 021- 938 9179, cl2@sun.ac.za, or Ms Natascha Horak, 021- 938 9762, nhorak@sun.ac.za.



Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD)

Brain imaging research in the past has largely been focused on looking at regional differences in **activity** in the brain. So for example, researchers demonstrated that in the brains of people with SAD, there might be more activity in the amygdala (a part of the brain involved in anxiety) than would be expected in people without the disorder. While this work remains important, such regional differences only represent part of the picture!

Functional connectivity research is a recent method of brain analysis that allows scientists to examine how multiple, widespread **connections** in the brain **result** in these regional differences in activity. Groups of these connections form what are known as 'neural networks' and several of such networks have so far been detected. There is some evidence that one network in the brain (called the default mode network) may play a role in how **social** information is processed (social information includes our perceptions and thoughts about other people and how they perceive us).

We are interested in networks in the brains of SAD sufferers and whether they differ from those without the disorder. We want to investigate whether network differences can be linked to how people with SAD process social information. We also want to see the effect of treatment (using an established treatment for SAD – moclobemide) on these networks.

As part of our research, we soon plan to recruit **15 volunteers with SAD and 15 volunteers without SAD** (for comparison) to take part in a study that aims to begin in January 2015. All participants will undergo two types of brain scan (FDG PET/CT and fMRI) and a series of psychological tests. SAD volunteers will then receive an 8-9 week course of moclobemide followed by repeat testing and scanning.

Excluding the initial (screening) visit, SAD participants will need to attend 8 study visits over the course of 9 weeks, while control participants will need to attend 4 study visits over the course of 1-2 weeks. Participants will be reimbursed for their food and travel costs.

If you are interested (either as a SAD participant or as someone without SAD), please speak to any of the investigators:

Prof Christine Lochner (cl2@sun.ac.za)

Tel: 021 – 938 9179

Dr Alex Doruyter (doruyter@sun.ac.za)

Tel: 021 – 938 5290

Dr Sharain Suliman (sharain@sun.ac.za)

Tel: 021 – 938 9020



Obsessive-compulsive and hair-pulling disorder (trichotillomania)

This is an important clinical, genetics and brain-imaging study conducted by the SU/UCT MRC Unit on Anxiety & Stress Disorders in conjunction with Cambridge University in the UK. The study covers clinical aspects of these disorders – symptoms, illness severity, impact on the quality of your life, treatment history and childhood trauma history, while also looking at genetics and the structure of certain brain regions implicated in these conditions.

What is obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)?

In DSM-IV (which is one of the major diagnostic tools used in practice), OCD was categorised as one of the anxiety disorders. In DSM-5 however, OCD now falls under a grouping of obsessive-compulsive and related disorders. OCD is a psychiatric disorder characterised by obsessions and/or compulsions. Obsessions are persistent, “self-generated” (i.e. not delusional or psychotic) thoughts or mental images that are time-consuming, cause significant distress or functional impairment. Compulsions, on the other hand, are repetitive mental (e.g. counting, repeating words) or behavioural (e.g. hand-washing, checking) acts that the person feels obliged to perform in an attempt to reduce the anxiety or distress or preventing some dreaded event. However, compulsions are not inherently enjoyable, are often extremely time-consuming and do not result in the completion of a useful task.

What is hair-pulling disorder (HPD)?

HPD is also now categorized as an obsessive-compulsive related disorder. It is characterized by recurrent pulling out of one’s hair resulting in hair loss, with repeated attempts to decrease or stop hair pulling. The hair pulling causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

What will the study entail?

Specifically, the study covers clinical aspects of the disorders (e.g. the symptoms, illness severity, impact on their quality of life, treatment history, and childhood trauma history). Other foci are the structure of certain brain regions implicated in these conditions, and participants thinking patterns and emotional responses, as determined by structural and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), respectively. The study also aims to find out more about the role of specific polymorphisms in certain candidate genes (the hereditary material) that contribute to the development of OCD, HPD and SAD via analysis of candidate genes of patients from South Africa.

Who to contact to take part

If you want more information or want to participate, please contact: Prof Christine Lochner 021 – 938 9179, e-mail: cl2@sun.ac.za or Elsie Breet 021 – 938 9654, e-mail: elsie@sun.ac.za for more information.



Research degrees and accolades



Congratulations to Sharain Suliman who completed her PhD and she received a Claude Leon post-doctoral fellowship for 2015-2016.

Title: Clinical and Neuropsychological Predictors of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Authors: Sharain Suliman, PhD, Dan J. Stein, MD, PhD, and Soraya Seedat, MD, PhD

Published in: Medicine 2014 Nov, 93(22):e113

We sadly say goodbye to Sharain who will be joining the Department of Psychiatry.

Congratulations to Nathan McGregor who completed his PhD.

Title: The identification of novel susceptibility genes involved in anxiety disorders. Supervisors: Christine Lochner (co-supervisors: Sian Hemmings and Craig Kinnear).

Congratulations to Prof Christine Lochner who received the following accolades in 2014:

- i.) Subcommittee C postdoctoral fellowship grant from Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University
- ii.) Biological Psychiatry Research Career Award
- iii.) Finalist for the 2013/14 NSTF-BHP Billiton Awards in the Category: For an outstanding contribution to Science, Engineering, Technology and Innovation by an Individual: TW Kambule award: through research and its outputs (over the last five to ten years).
- iv.) "Rektortoeckenning vir algemene prestasie", Stellenbosch University.

Congratulations to Annerine Roos who received a BTh degree (Theology).

Welcome



Ms Natascha Horak joined the MRC Unit in 2014 and is a research assistant to Professor Christine Lochner. She is coordinating the study on gambling disorder and assists Prof Lochner with other studies such as the OCD and TTM imaging studies.

Her academic record consists of an integrated undergraduate and postgraduate degree in Psychology ("Dipl.-Psych."; equivalent to a Master's degree in Psychology in South Africa), which she obtained at Kiel University in Germany (August 2013).

After returning to her home country South Africa, she completed two full-time psychology internships at the Adolescent Unit of AKESO Kenilworth Clinic in Cape Town (6 months) as well as Montrose Manor Treatment Centre for Eating Disorders in Cape Town (4 months).



And a sad 'good-bye' to Elsie Breet

who is leaving the unit to pursue a PhD.