

Newsletter 12 (Spring 2007)

OSMHN continues to thrive thanks to the participation of our partner institutions and all the busy people and agencies that support the network. This regular newsletter aims to summarise our activities and to share information about what members of the network are doing to support the mental health of students in Oxford. It also flags up training opportunities, many of them local and relatively low cost. If you work with students and would like to share information either about your role or planned activities via the newsletter, email osmhn@brookes.ac.uk.

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1. THE OSMHN WEB SITE - WHAT'S NEW?

Summaries of the [Alcohol and Drug Workshops](#) delivered in 2006 and the more recent workshops on [Mental Health and Student Diversity](#) (complete with handouts) are now posted on the site.

New resources are regularly being added to the OSMHN website. Below are just a few of them.

Links

FOR STUDENTS

Mind your head - A student guide to healthy minds in healthy bodies

Practical tips and information on managing stress and achieving and maintaining positive mental health and emotional wellbeing. The booklet targets first year students at university and further and higher education colleges.

<http://www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk/Resources/mental/pdfs/mind%20ur%20hed%20stdnt%20resourse%20revised%202003.pdf>

Students against depression

Launched in October, this site contains resources for students including comprehensive information and discussion about what is depression, strategies for tackling depression and how to get further support and help.

<http://www.studentdepression.org>.

FOR STAFF

Supporting students with mental health difficulties – University of Surrey

Practical advice and guidance for staff dealing with students who are, or may be, facing mental health difficulties. Includes lots of tips and advice and includes flow charts for staff to use.

http://www.surrey.ac.uk/dsg/documents/Mental_Health.pdf#search='mental%20health%20students%20staff

2. FUTURE OSMHN WORKSHOP

RELAX AND REVITALISE

How to Help Students to Manage Stress Creatively

Friday 23 February 2007 1:30-4:30 pm

Oxford Brookes University

What is the workshop about?

The workshop will highlight practical & creative ways that staff and peer supporters can help students to deal with stress.

Topics covered will include:

- What stress is – how it can affect us – when it is necessary and when it is detrimental
- How to recognise stress signals – early warning system
- How thoughts can increase or decrease stress levels, changing unhelpful ways of thinking
- Relaxation Techniques – practical, focussed techniques; guided imagery; awareness of breathing; reinforcing positive statements
- Sleep problems – ideas for improving sleep and waking up!
- Nutrition – simple changes that can make a difference

Who is the workshop for?

The workshop, which will be facilitated by Caroline Merry & Dr. Nicola Spiller - both from Oxford University Counselling Service, is intended for anyone whose role involves supporting students of Oxford Brookes University, the University of Oxford or Oxford & Cherwell Valley College.

There is no charge for the workshop, although a £1 donation is requested for refreshments.

What are the arrangements for booking, etc?

Email bjackson@brookes.ac.uk making sure you put "OSMHN Workshop" in the subject heading. It would be helpful, when requesting a place, if you also state your role in supporting students. You will receive confirmation of your booking and details of the room by email.

3. PAST WORKSHOPS

Mental Health & Student Diversity – on the 9th and 30th November, 2006

Alison Barty from SOAS (University of London) presented two workshops covering the wide range of topics related to the mental well being of students from diverse backgrounds. The fact that both workshops were oversubscribed indicated both the interest and the anxiety amongst staff wanting to provide the best support they can for students who may be along way from their home culture and support networks.

As preparation for the workshop, participants were asked to read an article co-written by Alison with Young Minds, a mental health charity focusing on children and young persons. The article entitled Higher Education Institutions and International Students' Mental Health, provides a good overview of the subject and can be found on the charity's web site <http://www.youngminds.org.uk/sos/students.php>

The first part of the workshop outlined terms of reference regarding mental health .It may be helpful to think of a continuum of well being or functioning with mental health at one end and active suicidal risk at the other. Events or periods of stress can move us along the continuum into mental distress or even into a common disorder such as an eating difficulty or anxiety. If things get worse, we may engage in damaging behaviours such as self-harm or risk-taking. A smaller number of people will go on to experience severe mental illness.

A useful way of looking at mental health problems is found on the Mental Health Foundation [web-site:](#)

"Mental health problems range from the worries and grief we all xperience as part of everyday life, to the most bleak, suicidal depression or complete loss of touch with everyday reality."

Positive Mental Health is about:

- **Feeling in control**
- **Being able to make rational decisions**
- **Being in touch with our feelings**
- **Being able to form positive relationships**
- **Feeling good about ourselves**
- **Knowing how to look after ourselves**

Factors which affect the general student population such as unmet expectations and loss of family & friendship networks can affect international students especially since travelling to their home country for University vacation periods may be too costly. Culture shock, language difficulties, weather, financial problems and racial discrimination are factors which can impact on the student's well being. If mental health problems arise, accessing appropriate help or even feeling that is ok to seek help may be more problematic if your culture has different attitudes and language for the symptoms you are experiencing.

The following is a handout which outlined some useful suggestions for those offering support to such students:

DO'S

- Do take your time and listen to what the student is saying if you are in the position of talking to a student who appears mentally unwell
- Do consider the impact of culture shock
- Do consult with colleagues or relevant professionals e.g. counselling service, medical centre, student mental health worker
- Do consider using 'cultural interpreters' to get a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of the behaviour, if it is difficult to understand from the student. Consider the possibility of getting counselling in the student's mother language, bearing in mind that some students will prefer to be seen outside their 'community'
- Do pay attention to your 'gut' feeling. If you feel that a student is not thriving, follow up in some way
- Do pay attention to other students affected e.g. flatmates, classmates. They may need support or counselling
- Do accept that in some circumstances, if the student won't accept help, there may be nothing you can do, unless the circumstances get more severe

DON'TS

- **Don't** make assumptions
- **Don't** be fearful of cultural difference
- **Don't** use medical language. Use language that will be more understandable and acceptable to students such as unhappy, stressed, frightened, not feeling yourself
- **Don't** ignore your concerns or those of others
- **Don't** exceed the level of your competence but use the resources available
- **Don't** avoid disciplinary procedures if a student's behaviour is disruptive in a way that is unacceptable. However disciplinary procedures need to be implemented sensitively, taking medical advice where possible

SOME POSSIBLE INTERVENTIONS

- Understanding and acceptance of the student's experience as valid
- Understanding of the importance of confidentiality
- Positive re-interpretations, strategies for planning, active coping, reduction in competing activities, neutralising thoughts
- Interpretation of potentially ambiguous experiences from different perspectives, assisting clarification
- Activities that will contribute to integration
- Supportive networks, whether socially based, faith based, sports based

- Participatory events that are not psychologically focused
- Counselling/psychotherapy delivered in a culturally sensitive way
- Other 'healing' approaches e.g. acupuncture, yoga, relaxation techniques
- Use of an 'advocate' or 'cultural interpreter'
- Self access material as well as experienced personnel
- Counselling/support in mother language

EXAMPLES OF GENERAL EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Samaritans Japanese Language Helpline

<http://www.cls.org.uk/japanese.html>

020 7287 5493

Royal College of Psychiatrists

1. General resource information on mental health

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/info/index.htm>

2. A series of leaflets on aspects of mental health in Chinese (not specified Cantonese or Mandarin)

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation/languages/chinese.aspx>

3. A leaflet on depression in other languages including Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali, Punjab (hard copy only)

4. An Arabic language leaflet on depression

http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/PDF/dep_arabic.pdf

Muslim Youth Helpline

<http://www.myh.org.uk>

help@myh.org.uk

0808 8008 2008

Chinese Mental Health Association

<http://www.cmha.org.uk/>

Wah Sum Helpline

0845 122 8660

MIND

General resource information on mental health. Some leaflets in other languages

<http://www.mind.org.uk/Information/Factsheets/Diversity/Mental+Health+in+Translation.htm>

REFERENCES

Hofstede, G. and Hofstede, G.J. (2005) Cultures and Organisations: Software of the Mind. McGraw Hill: New York

HUCS (2002) Beautiful Minds? Students, Mental Health and the University BACP: Rugby

Rana, R., Smith, E. and Walkling, J. (1999) Degrees of Disturbance BACP: Rugby

Stanley, N. and Manthorpe, J. (2002) Students' Mental Health Needs: Problems and Responses. Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London

Universities UK (2000) Guidelines on Student Mental Health: Policies and Procedures for Higher Education UUK: London

Ward, C., Bochner, S. and Furnham, A. (2001). The Psychology of Culture Shock. Routledge: Hove

Zwingmann, C. A. and Gunn, D.G. (1983) Uprooting and Health: psychosocial problems of students from abroad. WHO: Geneva (out of print?)

SOME LITERATURE, FILMS ETC WHICH SHOW CULTURAL INTERPRETATIONS OF MENTAL ILLNESS

A Beautiful Mind (2001) dir. Ron Howard

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975) dir. Milos Forman

A Reasonable Man (Channel 4) dir. Gavin Hood

Shine (1996) dir. Scott Hicks

Murakami, H (2000) Norwegian Wood. Vintage: London

Pamuk, O. (2002) Snow. Faber and Faber (London)

Rhys, J. (1966, 2001 new ed.) The Wide Sargasso Sea. Penguin (London)

4. OXFORDSHIRE MIND REACHING OUT TO STUDENTS?

Early summer is traditionally a fraught time for Oxford students as they prepare to sit their exams. On Friday 5th May 2006 Oxfordshire Mind held a 'Student Stress Awareness Day' at Trinity College to provide information and support, and to raise awareness about mental health issues and services.

Mind workers were on hand to give tips on anxiety management and general mental health, and there were also talks from a stress consultant and an employee of the Global Retreat Centre, who ran short meditation and relaxation classes. Representatives attended from the University Counselling service and from the evening student helpline, Nightline, there was advice on stopping or cutting down on smoking and a wide range of leaflets as well as natural health remedies available to take away.

Andrew Kirtley, a Mind worker who attended the event, said: 'There was an excellent mix of speakers and it was a good chance to network and make contact with student agencies, as well as to talk to the students themselves. I spoke to one young man who was obviously incredibly stressed out, even though it wasn't his final year. He found the event very useful and stayed most of the day.'

The event was supported by Oxford University Students' Union and about 20 students attended. Feedback was very positive: Claire McGowan of Oxfordshire Mind, who organised the event, said: 'There was feeling that it was really necessary, but it would be even better to have it earlier in the year. With this in mind, we're hoping to hold a similar event at Oxford Brookes early in 2007.'

Recent news

Staff from Oxfordshire MIND are hoping to link up with students at Oxford Brookes in a variety of ways. Watch this space!

Oxfordshire Mind and Mental Health Matters provide a Mental Health Information Service 0165 247788 Monday-Friday 9:30-4:30. Or you can drop-in at 19 Paradise St, Oxford (until April 2007) on Tuesday -Friday from 1-4:30.

Mind also run a Crisis Line 7 nights a week from 7pm-1am everyday on 01865 251152

If you would like a poster (or several) about these services for your college or hall notice boards contact osmhn@brookes.ac.uk or info@oxford-mentalhealth.org

5. OCTS TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

OXFORD CO-OPERATIVE TRAINING SCHEME

Oxford Night Shelter Registered Charity Number: 297806

New Spring Programme

All courses will be now held at a new venue for OCTS courses – Ark T Centre, Crowell Road, Cowley, Oxford OX4 3LN

A printed copy of the **OCTS Training Bulletin** for the new term – May to June 2007 - was posted to everyone on our mailing list on Friday 4 th January. If you would like a copy or would like to find out more about the courses on offer, go to www.octs.org.uk or email the course organiser Gina Ball

admin@octs.org.uk



**For better
mental health**



As many as 1 in 4 of us in Oxfordshire will experience a mental health problem at some time in our lives. Mind day services are here to provide help, support and information in your local community.

**Oasis is a women
only mental health
service offering...**



**Support
Someone to talk to
A safe space
Friendship
Information
Advice
Refreshments
Groups
Social outings
Out-of-hours
support**



Open:

Monday
5pm-9pm
Friday
11am-3pm

Address:

331 Cowley
Rd, Oxford
Entrance via
Kenilworth Ave

Phone:

01865 721472
(opening hours only)

For other Oxfordshire Mind services call
01865 511702 www.oxfordshire-mind.org.uk

Registered Charity Number 261476

6. UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD DISABILITY SERVICE

Increasing numbers of students with mental health problems, particularly bi-polar disorder, are seeking assistance from the Disability Office at Oxford University. Whereas other groups of disabled students often "declare" on application to University or once a diagnosis has been made, students with mental health difficulties are often reluctant to do so.

This would appear to be due to perceived stigma of a diagnosis, a lack of awareness of the impact of their ill health on their studies or because of lack of awareness of the support available.

The Disability Office are often approached by College staff and / or the student at a point of crisis, usually around examination time or just as a student is returning from a medical related break in their studies (the Oxford eight week terms are so intensive that once a student falls behind it is a massive effort to cover lost ground which often exacerbates a mental health problem). Oxford Colleges are often a small community so

students are rarely lost in the crowd but can equally feel constantly under observation or that everyone "knows".

Recently, by using a range of mentors, we have been successful in achieving a smooth (as is possible with fluctuating conditions) transition for students to re-enter academic and College life or engage more successfully with their academic studies. All of the mentors we use from outside of students College and others are outside of the University

[usually professionals we have met via OSMHN events, Colleagues based in the Department of Psychiatry or colleagues based in Counselling Services].

There is not enough scope or space to cover what we mean by Mentoring but the following examples may give a flavour of what we mean:

Student X is a second year Law student who had a year out after being

diagnosed with bi-polar. She felt she needed help with planning and time management and guidance on what to focus on to combat the effect of her medication. Law is a very intensive degree with masses of reading to cover.

We provided a mentor with experience of studying law at Oxford who also had experience of supporting students at other schools and HEIs. Student X is happy with the support as it allows her to check and confirm her study priorities for the week, plan the reading and the essays she needs to produce. They meet for one hour a week.

Student Y is a music student who has a diagnosis of rapid cycling bi-polar disorder. In this case the mentor is from the Department of Psychiatry as it was more the impact of the illness, rather than the academic output that was of concern. The mentor has been able to help the student raise concerns about forthcoming examinations and these have been accommodated

by the student's College (one request was for examinations to take place in the morning when the student functions best). The student has also produced, with his tutor, an email to all academic staff involved in his teaching to inform them of the areas of study that his illness impacts upon so they can take this on board when teaching.

The mentor was able to support the student in doing this, explaining from a neutral [non-College] perspective the benefits of doing so. They meet weekly for two hours (although more hours are needed during difficult periods of the term around examinations and other stressful events).

It would be wonderful to have a "one size fits all" mentoring programme but in reality each mentor needs to be provided on a case by case basis.

Pete Quinn
Senior Disability Officer
University of Oxford

This article was part of a series of articles outlining what various network members do in their work with students. If you would like to tell others about your work or the work of your team, email osmhn@brookes.ac.uk.

7. OSMHN STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

OSMHN is supported and advised by a Steering Group consisting of representatives from its partner institutions. The present members are as follows:

Oxford University
Elsa Bell, Head of Counselling
Alan Percy, Deputy Head, Counselling Service
Dame Fiona Caldicott, Principal of Somerville College

Judith English, Chair of Student Health and Welfare Committee
Peter Quinn, Head of Disability Service
Yo Davies, College Nurses Association

Oxford Brookes University
Keith Cooper, Head of Student Services (Chair)
Marion Casey, Senior Counsellor
Sue Wilkinson, Counsellor
Linda Williams, Head of Disability Service

Oxford College of Further Education
Viv Miles, Student Services Manager

Oxford City Primary Care Trust
Amer Akbar, Service Re-design Manager

Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Mental Healthcare NHS Trust
June Dent, Consultant Clinical Psychologist

General Practitioners
Dr. Ann Bevan
Dr. Neil MacLennan
Dr Gordon Gancz

8. OSMHN CONTACT DETAILS

OSMHN is unable to offer direct support or advice to students, but aims to collaborate with those organisations and services that are involved in supporting students with mental health problems. OSMHN is currently staffed by a part-time administrator one day a week, Barbara Jackson, who can be contacted at:

c/o OSMHN
Oxford Brookes University
The Lodge
Harcourt Hill, OX2 9AT

E-mail: osmhn@brookes.ac.uk

<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/osmhn>