



CAUSES OF SCHIZOPHRENIA

On October 20th, Dr. Kwame McKenzie was joined by an eager audience of staff, family and friends to learn more about the causes of schizophrenia at an educational evening held at CAMH. Dr. McKenzie is a Senior Scientist within the Social Equity and Health Research section, the Deputy Director of Continuing & Community Care in the Schizophrenia Program, a Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto, and a Professor at the Institute of Philosophy Diversity and Mental Health, University of Lancashire .

Firstly, he stated that there is not a single cause of schizophrenia. There are numerous factors that can increase one's risk of onset and the more risk factors one endures, the more likely they are to develop a diagnosis of schizophrenia. Most often though, people have no identifiable risk factors. Dr. McKenzie discussed such factors as genetics, function and structure of the brain, month of birth, childhood trauma, psychological trauma and perceived psychosocial trauma, substance misuse, stress and social isolation. Any or all of these increase the chances of developing psychosis.

Genetics

Genetics are one factor that researchers have looked at over the years. We know that there must be a genetic factor due to the incidence rates being higher when someone else in the family has a diagnosis of schizophrenia. Also, twin studies have shown that identical twins



have a 48% risk of a diagnosis of schizophrenia compared to the 1% risk of the general population. The fact that identical twins do not always share this diagnosis demonstrates that schizophrenia cannot be purely a genetic illness and that there must be an interaction between genes and the environment that may affect this illness.

Function and Structure of the Brain

There may be a problem with connectivity between different parts of the brain as there is decreased activity in the frontal lobes, hippocampus and temporal lobes of someone with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. Also findings of structural abnormalities vary person to person probably because of the variation in schizophrenia but there is generally less grey (brain) matter and more ventricular space in someone with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. Doctors are not if clear this is a cause or an indicator.

Month of Birth

There is some evidence, though inconclusive, that winter and spring births are more likely to develop schizophrenia. This could be due to a number of factors such as vitamin D intake or viral infection.

Childhood Trauma

Studies have found that a number of social factors increase the risk of developing schizophrenia. Children who are under 15 when separated from one or both parents are at an increased risk, up to 3 times more likely, to develop psychosis. This again could be connected to the fact that this may lead to less

A NUMBER OF SOCIAL FACTORS INCREASE THE RISK OF DEVELOPING SCHIZOPHRENIA:

- SEPARATION FROM PARENTS FOR MORE THAN A YEAR IN CHILDHOOD
- SOCIAL ADVERSITY IN CHILDHOOD (MORE ADVERSITY MORE RISK)
- PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA/BULLYING
- BEING BORN AND BROUGHT UP IN A CITY

controlled situations, lower economic situation and/or social adversity.

Psychological Trauma

Trauma such as bullying can also increase ones chances of psychosis. Similarly, being brought up in a city can also increase one's chances and the larger the city, the larger the risk. Why? Even perceived trauma, such as worrying that someone may be racist towards you can increase your risk of developing schizophrenia.

MOST PEOPLE HAVE NO IDENTIFIABLE RISK FACTORS

MOST FAMILIES DO NOT HAVE GENETIC FACTORS

MOST PEOPLE HAVE NOT HAD PROBLEMS IN CHILDHOOD

RISK FACTORS INCREASE VULNERABILITY:

- GENETICS
- OBSTETRIC PROBLEMS
- INFECTIONS
- SOCIAL FACTORS IN CHILDHOOD

Substance Misuse

There is a complex relationship between drugs and schizophrenia. Drugs can trigger both the onset and a relapse into psychosis. A 10-year study that Dr. McKenzie discussed showed that people who smoke marijuana are 37.5 times more likely to have a psychosis diagnosis. Amphetamine users showed 27.9 times likely. A Swedish study found that youths that have smoked more than 50 times before they were eighteen had six times higher risk than those youth who hadn't. Though cannabis seems to be a sufficient factor, if it was eliminated, it would only decrease incidence by 8% and therefore is not a sufficient or necessary factor.

Stress

Stressful neighbourhoods, daily hassles and perceived lack of control over life events all increase the likelihood of developing psychosis. Migrant groups also have a higher risk than host populations. This could be due to racism, which increases one's risk.

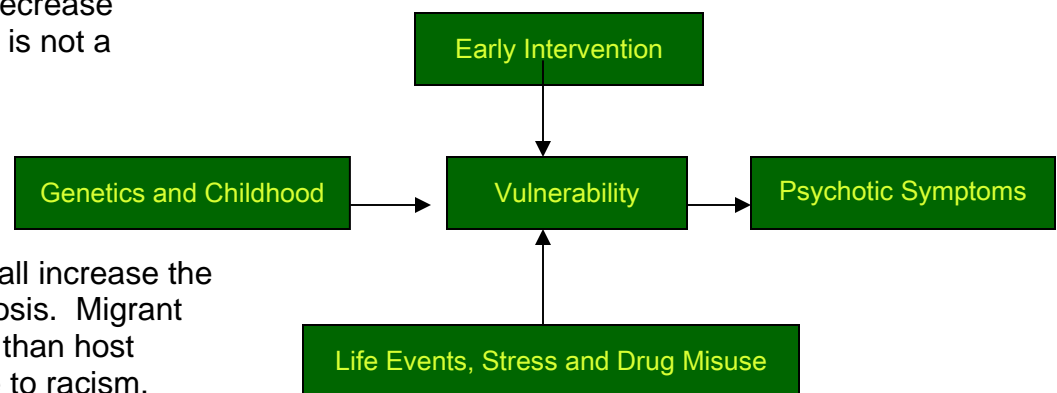
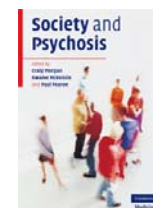
Social Isolation

Chances of developing schizophrenia also increase if you are a racial minority within a community. But, if you are a minority or single mother living in a community housed with similar people then this risk does not increase.

Throughout Dr. McKenzie's presentation, he used insight into how causation works by looking at someone who has had a heart attack. He emphasized that high cholesterol, lack of exercise, fast food consumption, and stress are risk factors that increase the chance of a heart attack. Schizophrenia has similar risk factors that can be controlled. In both cases, we need a balance between Risk factors and Protective factors. The same goes for psychosis; we need to lower the known risk factors that increase chances of developing psychosis. We still do not know the cause.

For more information please read **Society and Psychosis (Paperback)**

~ Craig Morgan (Editor), Kwame McKenzie (Editor), Paul Fearon (Editor)



GOODBYE FROM ANN ORR, FORMER FAMILY COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Dear Family Council Members,

It is with sadness that I have come to the end of my five year term as President of The Family Council because I will miss all my colleagues and the work of the board. However, I have no regrets, only a sense of privilege for the opportunity to be part of a young organization that is growing and developing every day. In a very short time, Family Council has had a profound influence on attitudes at CAMH in ensuring that family and client centred care is a priority. In fact, being sensitive to families is part of the CAMH's new Strategic Plan. But we still have a long way to go. There is so much important work to be done and we need your help, therefore I am not going far away. I am still a member of The Family Council and will continue to sit on various committees at CAMH as well.

The Family Council motto "Facing it Together" is well stated. We wouldn't have come as far as we have without volunteers working closely with staff. Some of our major accomplishments have been:

- developing a new informative pamphlet with three different covers to reflect the diversity of our community (available at The Family Council office)
- producing a compelling DVD thanks to the remarkable families who tell their personal stories with warmth and grace
- creating a website that is regularly updated with helpful information for families
- writing a comprehensive Governance and Training Manual for new board members.

None of these major projects would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of board directors, staff, and our volunteer consultants.

I know, as we move on, that you will want to join with me in wishing Maureen Foy, our newly elected President, our very best wishes in her new role. Maureen's five years experience as a board director, member of a number of CAMH and Family Council Committees, former FC Treasurer, and Co-Chair of the Family Centred Care Initiative (FCCI) at CAMH, will bring the leadership skills she has demonstrated to The Family Council. We are so fortunate to have such a dedicated, well informed volunteer as President.

A very hearty thank you to all the board of directors who have generously dedicated their time and energy to Family Council's mission and goal, as well as to our innovative staff, who work tirelessly, efficiently and joyously. Thank you all for your unqualified support over the years. It has been a fantastic journey. My only regret is that I didn't get to know more Family Council members during my term but it is never too late. I will enjoy meeting and talking to you all at the next Membership Event.

All the very best,

Ann Orr
Past President,
The Family Council Board

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EMPLOYMENT-RELATED TRANSPORTATION

On November 30th 2009, *Ontario Disability Savings Plan* and *Ontario Works* presented at the Queen Street site to those interested.

Ms. Patricia DaSilva shared information about a \$100 per month allowance for employment-related transportation. This allowance is available for those receiving social assistance and participate in Approved Ontario Works activities.

These activities are as follows:

- Structured job search programs such as *Employment Placement, Job Connect* or job finding programs offered by Service Canada and community agencies
- Skills training programs including courses offered through *Employment and Social Services*
- *Pre-Employment Development programs*
- **Volunteering**
- *Self-Employment Development Program*,
- Educational programs such as General Educational Development (GED) and Literacy and Basic Skills Programs

The employment-related transportation allowance is \$100 per month, whether you use a car or take public transit. You can get this amount for each month that you are in an approved activity.

Volunteering

Volunteering is one of the activities that will allow you to receive this employment-related transportation allowance.

Volunteering can help you get employment-

related experience, learn new skills and meet people who may help with career opportunities.

If you are thinking about volunteering or looking for a place to volunteer, you may want to consider:

- what skills you want to learn,
- what your employment goals are, and much time you have to volunteer

Volunteering must be with a non-profit organization.

- Volunteer activities are approved for up to six months; however this may be extended in some circumstances.
- In most cases, you must be at least 18 years of age.

To be assessed for extra financial benefits, you can ask the agency to fill out a **Volunteering Details form** at:

http://www.toronto.ca/socialservices/pdf/vol_details.pdf and give your caseworker the completed form for review.

For more information, talk to your Ontario Works caseworker or your ODSP income support worker, or go to an **Employment and Social Services Employment Resource Centre**



For more information please visit.....
<http://www.toronto.ca/socialservices>