Let’s Be Clear

**Communicating More Effectively with People who have Mental Illness**
**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2019, 7:30 PM**

We welcome back Cori Cather, PhD, master of communication, Director of Psychology Services for Schizophrenia Clinical and Research Program, Massachusetts General Hospital Schizophrenia Program, Director, Center of Excellence in Psychosocial and Systemic Research, MGH

*Macht Auditorium Cambridge Hospital, 1493 Cambridge St., Cambridge*  
(Vouchers available for garage parking)

**PROGRAMS COMING THIS SPRING**

> **MINDFULNESS & MEDITATION**
  Ted Meissner  
  Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society, University of Massachusetts Medical School  
  Talk and 15-minute guided meditation + Q & A

> **OPEN DIALOGUE**
  Learn from the experts the power of this revolutionary of mental health care model. A consistent family and social network approach which always include the patient

> **PEER PERSPECTIVES ON EMPLOYMENT & SUPPORTS**
  Join us for a panel discussion on employment resources and lived experience navigating the workplace with a mental health condition.

> **SPEAKING OF SCIENCE 2019**
  **Digging Deep on the Impact of Marijuana**
  Anne Eden Evins, MD  
  Massachusetts General Hospital  
  Dr. Evins’ research interests, currently supported by major grants from the National Institutes of Drug Abuse, include pharmacotherapy for nicotine dependence, negative symptoms of schizophrenia, co-occurring psychiatric and substance use disorders and cognitive dysfunction in schizophrenia.

**FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS**

Welcome to the free and confidential Family Support Groups of NAMI-Cambridge/Middlesex. No sign-up necessary.

**FOR CAREGIVING FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS.**
**1ST AND 3RD MONDAYS YEAR-ROUND, 7:30-9:00 PM**

CHA LEARNING CENTER, CAMBRIDGE HOSPITAL, 3RD FLOOR  
1493 CAMBRIDGE ST., CAMBRIDGE, MA

For information, email rae@nami-cambridgemiddlesex.org or visit nami-cambridgemiddlesex.org.

**THINGS TO KNOW...**

You don’t need to explain anything. We already understand.

Mental illness is treatable.

It’s not anyone’s fault.

Together we can give each other strong support.
Support group for peers/consumers

NAMI Mass Office (Waukegan, IL) - 847-580-8541
John and Joan’s Center, 129 Main St., Ste. 1467
Boston, MA 02129

Psychiatric Emergencies

Call 911 for immediate medical help.

CHA Cambridge Hospital
The Psychiatric Emergency Service (PES) of the Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA) is located in the Emergency Department at Cambridge Hospital, 1495 Cambridge St., Cambridge. Psychiatric and clinical social workers are on duty 24-hours a day.

BEST Team (Behavioral Emergency Service Team) 800-761-4357

Primary emergency service team that serves Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville. De-listens to behavioral health crisis assessment, intervention, and stabilization service in the community or at these two centers, 24 hours a day for individuals of all ages covered by Medicaid/Medicare, Medicaid, and the uninsured.

Other Resources

NAMI National Legal Center (naming mass.org under "Resources") include "Road Map through the Mental Illness Criminal Justice System for Persons with Mental Illness and Their Families."

Dr. Robert Laitman, internists, and their son Daniel shared their knowledge about Clozapine and to hear Daniel tell his story.

The Laitman family was joined by psychiatrist Dr. J. Alexander Bodziak and moderator, Dr. Deborah Levy, both of McLean Hospital, to share

The best thing about the future... is that it comes one day at a time. Abraham Lincoln

OCTOBER 10, 2018

When it comes to medications, the deciding factor is often "cost" vs. "benefit." In the case of Clozapine, a medication of choice for many with schizophrenia, a factor is the monthly blood draw required to check the white blood cell count. A pharmacist cannot dispense it otherwise. But, the benefits of Clozapine are such that attendants of the MGH Family Day factors on schizophrenia will remember hearing Dr. Olivier Friedenreich say that, if it were permitted…which it is not… the first medication he would prescribe to a patient with schizophrenia is Clozapine. Unlike other countries, for cost and safety reasons, US protocol dictates that a patient must fail on several antipsychotics before being prescribed Clozapine.

Why is Clozapine so efficacious and is it worth the trouble and the potential risk? For our October 2018 Program, we heard from Dr. Ann and Robert Laitman, internists, and their son Daniel about their positive experience with Clozapine.

The Laitman family was joined by psychiatrist Dr. J. Alexander Bodziak and moderator, Dr. Deborah Levy, both of McLean Hospital, to share their knowledge about Clozapine and to hear Daniel tell his story. Dr. Levy explained that the first challenge is to get a good diagnosis and then get an effective treatment plan. There is, as yet, no test for mental illnesses. Dr. Bodziak presented the history of Clozapine: first introduced more than 50 years ago as an anti-depressant, it was initially of interest because of its similar chemical structure to other effective drugs. It has a complex mode of action and some difficult side effects, including toxicity to white blood cells that can lead to agranulocytosis: an acute condition involving a lowered white blood cell count (WBC) and thus susceptibility to infection. It can be prevented by stopping Clozapine in time. Since there is a small risk of death, regular blood tests are mandated...a major inconvenience or "cost." However, Dr. Bodziak explained that it was the "wonder drug," more effective for patients than all previously known neuroleptic drugs for schizophrenia. Unlike other drugs, it did not cause tardive dyskinesia (TD). The symptoms of TD — jerky, involuntary movements — can become permanent.

He also emphasized exercise and diet as essential parts of treatment — running, walking, swimming regularly. "By now we have learned a lot of facts about schizophrenia, its progression and the mechanisms taking place in the brain," he explained. "Pruning" of neurotransmitters is a normal process of maturation, but schizophrenia causes this natural pruning to go too far, damaging normal brain function. Early treatment is essential. "Get as clear a diagnosis as possible and begin treatment early," he emphasized. Adherence to the medications and other recommended routines are important thereafter.

"Begin with lower doses and raise slowly to get to therapeutic levels," he advised. "Doctor visits should be scheduled weekly at first. Due to side effects, including toxicity to white blood cells that can lead to agranulocytosis, an acute condition involving a lowered white blood cell count (WBC) and thus susceptibility to infection, it can be prevented by stopping Clozapine in time. Since there is a small risk of death, regular blood tests are mandated...a major inconvenience or "cost." However, Dr. Bodziak explained that it was the "wonder drug," more effective for patients than all previously known neuroleptic drugs for schizophrenia. Unlike other drugs, it did not cause tardive dyskinesia (TD). The symptoms of TD — jerky, involuntary movements — can become permanent.

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Pete Earley: A Father’s Journey with His Son to Recovery

DECEMBER 4, 2018. Like many family members in his NAMI audience on December 4, Pete Earley threw everything he had into helping his son Kevin recover from mental illness—his skill as an investigative journalist, his contacts in Washington, D.C., and, above all, his immense love for his son. Six years later he shared the story of his son’s recovery and what he has learned: “Trust your heart. Accept the new normal and understand your limits, but always have hope. Get angry and fight for those you love. And get involved in NAMI!”

Pete gave an overview of what happened to his son and how a less-than-perfect mental health system responded to their family’s needs. “I know what it’s like to have my son become a complete stranger,” he said.

“Relatives tell you to just let him ‘hit rock bottom’. Psychiatrists tell you that your son has an incurable disease and will never get better or that they can’t do anything for him because ‘he’s not a danger to himself or others.’ Call us when he threatens to kill you,” they said several times.

After three arrests, five hospitalizations, abhorrent medication side effects, and scores of mediocre treatment professionals, Kevin encountered a caseworker who helped him take charge of his illness for the first time. “Let’s find a better medicine,” she said.

Next came housing and a job. He became a Peer-to-Peer specialist and is now working full time and in charge of his illness for the first time. “Let’s find a better medicine,” she said. Next came housing and a job. He became a Peer-to-Peer specialist and is now working full time and in charge of his illness for the first time. “Let’s find a better medicine,” she said. Next came housing and a job.

Movingly, Pete also showed a video of Kevin and some other family members describing their experience of recovery. Kevin is an advocate himself now, and even publicly told his story in a rap for the national mental health storytelling organization, This Is My Brave. I hearing Kevin’s own words gave a whole other dimension to the story.

Pete shared several other “need to know” resources for families and advocates to learn about in their states:

- Assertive Community Treatment (ACT): In MA usually called PACT and some Department of Mental Health (DMH) adult services under the ACCS umbrella fit this model. [https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dmh-adult-services-overview](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dmh-adult-services-overview)
- Housing First programs place homeless individuals in housing first and then provide services. With few “housing first” programs in MA, most that serve the mental health population find participants through DMH homeless outreach programs. [http://www.bphc.org/whatsnew/homlessness/homless-services/Pages/Housing-First-Initiative.aspx](http://www.bphc.org/whatsnew/homlessness/homless-services/Pages/Housing-First-Initiative.aspx)
- Clubhouses, like Fountain House in New York City: the MA Clubhouse Coalition website describes the Clubhouse model of supported employment and lists MA Clubhouses [https://www.massclubs.org/](https://www.massclubs.org/)
- Vinfen’s “Afternoon in the Park” is a staunch advocate for justice reform, Pete also mentioned Stepping Up, a national initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails. [https://steppinguptogether.org/](https://steppinguptogether.org/)
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Pete Earley is one of 14 non-federal members of the Interdepartmental Serious Mental Illness Coordinating Committee (ISMICC), an advisory group of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Read their recommendations, which are included in the group’s report to Congress in December 2017. [https://www.samhsa.gov/ismicc](https://www.samhsa.gov/ismicc)

Learn more about Pete Earley’s work, follow his blog, join his mailing list, etc. on his website:[http://www.peteearley.com/](http://www.peteearley.com/)

Cambridge-CM Honored at NAMI Mass Convention

Carolyn White (left) and Sharon de Vos received an “Unsung Hero” award at the NAMI Mass State Convention for their continued work teaching Family to Family. The team of White-DeVos has not only been teaching F2F for nearly a decade, helping more than 200 participants better understand mental illness, but they have also trained 25 new teachers.

Vinfen Puts Social Inclusion Funding to Work

Basketball, soccer, Frisbee, and bocce balls were flying at a park in East Cambridge this fall, thanks to NAMI-CM’s funding of Vinfen’s “Afternoon in the Park” program. This modestly-funded activity, staffed by the Cambridge Somerville Recovery Learning Center (RLC) took a small group of members to this weekly activity to get exercise, fresh air, relaxation, and some social time. It even led to the purchase of digital cameras, photographs in the park, and lots of sharing. Indecent weather led to indoor badminton, Wii sports, and dance and movement programs. The RLC also used the NAMI-CM funds to purchase books that address social skill building which are promoting group discussions and sharing.

Walk Captain John Sharp also picked up the prize for the top performing Walk Team. Under John’s outstanding leadership, the NAMI-CM team recruited 92 walkers and raised $56,000. Walkers joined us from all over the state, including a healthy contingent from Cambridge Health Alliance.
EDUCATION PROGRAM
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Does your son refuse to get up in the morning?

Does your sister insist she doesn’t need to take her medications?

Is your daughter engaging in dangerous behaviors and refusing help?

Has your husband gained 40 pounds and refuses to exercise?

Join us and learn from expert communicator Cori Cather, director of the Center of Excellence in Psychosocial and Systemic Research at MGH, effective strategies for communicating with your loved ones living with mental illness.

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