



**Mental Health
Information
Centre of
South Africa**



**University
of
Stellenbosch**

Mental Health Information Centre of South Africa

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REPORT:

Brain Awareness Week 16-22 March 2009

Brain Awareness Week (BAW) is an international campaign dedicated to raising public awareness of the progress and promise and benefits of brain research. This year the Mental Health Information Centre (MHIC), in conjunction with the Bathuthuzele Youth Stress Clinic, organized and hosted a BAW campaign during the week of 16-22 March. The focus of the 2009 BAW campaign was to let people know what is being done to diagnose, treat and prevent disorders of the brain.

The campaign was launched with a talk to psychiatrists in the Department of Psychiatry at the Tygerberg Campus of the University of Stellenbosch on the 16th of March, by Ms Zimbini Ogle (the new office administrator of the MHIC), on planned projects and BAW. On Tuesday, March 17, Grade 10 learners from Ravensmead High School and their teachers visited the Campus. The MHIC invited them for an informative and fun-filled day to celebrate brain awareness. These festivities included watching an educational film on the effects of substances on the brain. The visit also included attendance of a number of presentations:

- Prof Dana Niehaus, a consultant and a psychiatrist in the Department of Psychiatry gave a presentation on schizophrenia and the brain, and also focused on addressing the stigma associated with schizophrenia.
- Prof Ben Page from the Department of Biomedical Sciences gave a presentation on the effects of illicit drugs on the brain and on unborn babies, and also took the class on a guided tour of the Anatomy and Histology museum with its various displays of healthy and diseased brains.
- Ms Marie-Louise de Villiers, radiographer at the Cross-University Brain Imaging Centre (CUBIC), gave a presentation on magnetic resonance brain imaging and the uses thereof in treatment.
- Ms Annerine Roos a researcher at CUBIC, also demonstrated a brain imaging technique, Near-Infrared Spectroscopy, at CUBIC.
- Ms Annerine Roos and Ms Jenny Roos gave a presentation addressing stigma associated with brain damage and at the end conducted a quiz with the learners.

The BAW activities at Tygerberg Campus were subsequently followed by other events, including a radio interview on Radio Sonder Grense. This was a live broadcast from the SABC studio in Seapoint on Wednesday, 18 March 2009. Prof Christine Lochner, Mr Gustav van Greunen, and Ms Jenny Roos were interviewed by Ms Martelize Brink on the well-known “Wat sê die Dokter?”

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programme. This proved to be a success reaching the whole of South Africa with an influx of calls from all over the country to the MHIC on brain-related topics.

The information technology expertise of the health24.co.za made it possible to run a web-based forum. The web based interaction between guest experts and the public proved to be a success. The forum gave an opportunity for people to know about the functioning of their brains and how they are affected by injury, drugs, or disease. Dr Kevin Thomas and Dr Susan Malcolm-Smith from the ACSENT Laboratory, Department of Psychology, UCT, answered questions on this special guest expert forum on 20 March.

The BAW campaign for 2009 proved to be a huge success. We have many people to thank for their collaboration and participation.

A huge thank you to all those who funded and supported the BAW campaign:

Adcock Ingram, Bathuthuzele Youth Stress Clinic, Bristol Myers Squibb, Dementia SA, EDAB, Golden Arrow Buses, Health24, Sanofi Aventis, Shoprite, Spur, Tygervalley Shopping Centre

*** For more information and photos, go to www.mentalhealthsa.co.za**