

Presentation Proposal for Grand Psychiatric Rounds

Presenter's Names: Marion Gibson, John Gibson

Presentation Title: Unfaithful Mind: The story of a Victoria couple and their struggle to overcome mental illness and the mental health-care system

Presentation Abstract:

This presentation is based on the experiences of a married couple, when the husband, a water resources scientist and University of Victoria professor, suffered from severe psychosis and became mentally ill during the fall of 2011, as summarized in a recent book by Marion Gibson. It is an opportunity to learn how mental health care in Victoria affected a family during the onset, treatment and recovery process of a late-onset schizophrenia-like illness. Mental health practitioners will learn about the symptoms of the illness, barriers and challenges encountered while navigating an unfamiliar and complicated mental health care system, as well as the associated problems of trying to find psychiatric care, receive a diagnosis, and obtain follow-up support.

Presentation Description:

Two years ago, at age 45, John Gibson called 911 because he thought he had been poisoned by his wife and was going to die. John was delusional and had been experiencing auditory, olfactory and visual hallucinations. He told the first responders that he believed he was poisoned, spoke of hidden weapons and made reference to his wife having something to do with a high profiled unsolved murder investigation in their neighbourhood.

John arrived by ambulance to the Royal Jubilee Hospital where he was examined by an emergency room doctor and had his blood and urine tested. Four hours later, he was back at home, afraid to be in his house because of strange and unfamiliar smells and noises in his head. The next afternoon John drove himself to the hospital. This time he was taken to the Archie Courtnall Center. After staying there for three days, John begged his wife to take him home. Marion met with a social worker who advised them to follow-up with their family doctor. The couple left the hospital with a prescription for Ativan.

Over the next month, John stayed home from work, advised by the family doctor, a GP, and was told to treat this experience similar to that of a brain injury. John's delusions continued and by the end of the month the doctor gave John a choice of starting antipsychotic medication (Abilify) or returning to the Archie Courtnall Centre. John agreed to take the medication as prescribed and over the next few months, John's delusions and hallucinations worsened while the doctor monitored the situation. During this time John asked his wife for a divorce several times, demanded paternity tests of their three children, repeatedly accused her of unfaithfulness and even hopped on an airplane to Ontario to spend time with his own family.

There were three brief psychiatric consultations during this time that proved neither helpful nor diagnostic. John was too paranoid to trust a doctor and concealed the true nature of the delusions

and the extent of psychosis. His wife was not asked to attend these appointments. The family doctor tried several times via several pathways to find a psychiatrist willing to take his case.

Months later and still delusional, unresponsive to the high dose of antipsychotic medication, and suffering from uncomfortable side effects including akathisia, John was no longer able to work effectively or trust his wife. He reluctantly returned to the emergency at the Royal Jubilee Hospital looking for help and a different antipsychotic medication. Placed under a mandatory 48-hour hold in the Archie Courtnall Centre, John and his wife were finally able to speak with a psychiatric intern and two psychiatrists. A psychiatrist wrote John a new prescription for Risperidone and he went home. The new medication relieved John of the psychotic symptoms, and apart from the appearance of significant depression, he began to feel better. The doctor treated John with a couple of different antidepressants and after a few months John was able to function more effectively at work and at home.

John suffered a major psychotic break, lived in a chaotic delusional state for months, spent time spent at Archie Courtnall Centre and released, was prescribed an assortment of medications and dealt with unwanted side effects, all **without integrated, continuing specialized** care of a psychiatrist or any substantial follow-up. He currently lives without a diagnosis or any real explanation or understanding of his illness. The family has received little to no support or education from any mental health services. Any information about mental illness, delusions, hallucinations, psychosis and the various medications were learned through their own prowess and research. John's strict adherence to a daily medication regime and the diligence of a dedicated family doctor has enabled him to resume his professional career and enjoy a happy family life with his wife and children. He has continued to improve and has substantially reduced his anti- psychotic dosage over time.

Dealing with a paranoid and delusional spouse is terrifying, confusing and challenging enough without having to work within a complex mental health system. In order for full recovery to take place, the patient and their family need to move forward and function in a world where the stigma and discrimination associated with mental health is huge. Better information and education, access to services including psychiatric care and support are essential in the recovery process. Marion was inspired to write a memoir about their experience to help others going through a similar situation and help erase the huge stigma surrounding mental illness. Their story has been featured in several newspaper articles, CBC Radio and CFX 1070 interviews, and was the subject of a lecture given by Marion at the Eric Martin Pavilion sponsored by Bruce Saunders' Movie Monday.

We believe what we experienced and learned about the mental health-care system in Victoria could provide insight and perspective for the medical community. In the short time that the book has been available, we have already received positive feedback from

individuals affected by mental illness. It would be a privilege to have the opportunity to share our story.

General Outline of proposed presentation:

I. Introductions and short bios

II. Description of the manifestation and acute phase of the illness

III. A discussion of the struggle for psychiatric care during psychosis IV. Navigating the mental health care system looking for a diagnosis IV. The need for education and support

VII. Conclusion – Recovery and what we learned from this experience

VIII. Question and Answer period Learning Points:

how mental health care in Victoria affects families during the onset, treatment and recovery process of a late-onset schizophrenia-like illness.

The barriers and challenges faced by family when trying to navigate a complex system.

That doctors need to provide better information to patients and families - and the value of that in recovery