

June 9th 2015
College of Psychiatrists of Ireland

Limerick Man publishes “Embracing Sanity” a memoir of his experiences of Bi Polar disorder

Book compliments the publication of REFOCUS* inaugural report

Brian McNulty, a former probation officer has written a memoir detailing his experiences of Bi Polar disorder and how his encounter with psychiatric health professionals failed to offer him solace in his attempts to understand his condition.

What initially began as a way to make sense of his own journey and has evolved into a story that can provide hope for those at the beginning of their road to recovery.

Brian is a working member of REFOCUS* (*Recovery Experience Forum of Carers and Users of the Services*). Now in its fourth working year, **REFOCUS has published its inaugural report**** which showcases the work done, in partnership with the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland members and trainee psychiatrists. The College feels however, that despite great progress, the need to listen to patients and carers and the role played by REFOCUS in the College, is as important as ever

When Brian was first admitted to hospital in 1974 he was not an active participant in his care *‘I was frightened, hard to communicate with and prone to angry outbursts when challenged. I know now that these ideas and fears were not real. But the product of a mind struggling and losing the battle to maintain its sanity. I was disappointed with the level of knowledge shared and the value practitioners gave to my point of view. I was not an active participant in my treatment’*

‘I felt my role in the institution was being defined. The approach of the hospital was to ignore this understanding, rather than help me make sense of it; I was at the lowest level in the pecking order, totally dependent and with very little opportunity to influence or control my circumstances’.

Director of Communications and Public Education, Dr John Hillery commented saying *‘As a College, we recognise that a modern approach to psychiatric support for people with mental illness does not act in terms of a quick fix or a clinical recovery. We encourage recovery based values in mental health services and recognise that recovery rightfully belongs to people with lived experience of mental health problems’.*

‘When people with experience of mental illness and their families, are seen as part of the solution rather than the problem, it is only then that the mental health services can fully support the recovery of their clients. Education, hope and support are essential for people as they choose their route to recovery.’

REFOCUS continues its work with the College, to promote a message of hope, support and opportunity for all involved.

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Contact

Notes for the Editor:

* In 2011, The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland established *REFOCUS*, (*Recovery Experience Forum of Carers and Users of the Services*) a forum where the views and experiences of service users and family members/carers would inform and influence all aspects of College business and, in particular, the training of young, future psychiatrists.

** The inaugural report encompasses the work of REFOCUS since its inception and first plenary meeting in December, 2011. The report incorporates the following elements: the history and membership of REFOCUS; the adoption of REFOCUS as the name for the group; the arrangements for the management of our meetings and relationships; the presentations made by representatives of the College to our plenary groups; the papers presented at meetings of the College and involvement with the committees and faculties of the College.