

## **DOUGLAS INSTITUTE LAUNCHES INFO-TRAUMA, A TOOL FOR VICTIMS OF TRAUMATIC EVENTS AND HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS**

*In Canada, more than 76% of people have experienced a traumatic event that could produce symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and some 800,000 people are currently affected by it*

**Montreal, May 5, 2009**—The Douglas Mental Health University Institute today launched Info-TRAUMA ([www.info-trauma.org](http://www.info-trauma.org)), a unique reference and diagnostic tool for victims of traumatic events, their loved ones and healthcare professionals. With this interactive site, the first of its kind in North America, the Douglas Institute meets a crying need for information about post-traumatic stress disorder, the prevalence of which is not well known. A recent study<sup>1</sup> found that in Canada, more than 76% of the population had experienced at least one traumatic event that could cause symptoms of PTSD.

To put the relevance of this interactive tool into context, Professor Alain Brunet, Ph.D., a psychologist and researcher specializing in PTSD at the Douglas Institute, presented excerpts from Denis Villeneuve's film *Polytechnique*. Attending the screening were actor and producer Karine Vanasse and actor Sébastien Huberdeau, both of whom portray victims in the film.

"The events at the Polytechnique galvanized our collective awareness, but it is important to bear in mind that a wide range of traumatic events make the headlines every day, to the point that we become inured to them," said Mr. Brunet. "Traffic accidents, physical assault, incest and natural disasters are all events that, unfortunately, often result in PTSD, as do major incidents such as what happened at the Polytechnique. In Canada, 2.4% of people who have been exposed to a traumatic event show symptoms of PTSD<sup>2</sup>. This is substantial, because it means that about 800,000 people are affected," he explained.

Trauma is a reality that shatters the feelings of invulnerability felt by most people who have not experienced this type of shock. "What we wanted to do with the film *Polytechnique* was to show the difficulties faced by survivors of the tragedy," said Ms. Vanasse. "The Info-TRAUMA site is a resource that would definitely have helped people affected by this tragic event, both the survivors and their loved ones."

Professor Brunet and his team hope that Info TRAUMA will become an indispensable reference in the field of trauma. Their goal is to demystify PTSD and help people who

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<sup>1</sup> *CNS Neuroscience & Therapeutics* 14 (2008) 171-181, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Canada, Michael Van Ameringen, Catherine Mancini, Beth Patterson & Michael H. Boyle.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

are affected by it to put a name to the disorder, take care of themselves and get help. Along with case studies and references by country for psychological and legal assistance, Info-TRAUMA also offers a self-test for victims and their loved ones, and triage and diagnostic kits for professionals, doctors, nurses, ER personnel and mental health specialists. The electronic library available on the site also provides access to the international network of professionals at McGill University, with videos and factsheets about important concepts in mental trauma, written by researchers or clinicians with expertise in the concept being presented.

The creation of the Info-TRAUMA website was made possible in part by donations from the Douglas Mental Health University Institute Foundation and the Inukshuk Fund, established by Inukshuk Wireless, a joint venture of Bell Canada and Rogers Communications.

### **Public discussion with Alain Brunet and Karine Vanasse**

As a complement to the launch of Info-TRAUMA, the public is invited to a special screening of *Polytechnique*, on Thursday, May 7, at 6 p.m., at Cinéma du Parc. Following the screening, Karine Vanasse, Alain Brunet and Pascale Brillon, from the Anxiety Disorders Clinic at Montreal's Sacré-Cœur Hospital, will take part in a discussion on PTSD. The evening will be hosted by Ariane Émond, whose background includes working as a journalist at Radio-Canada. This evening is presented by the Douglas Institute, as part of Frames of Mind.

### **About the Douglas Institute – [www.douglas.qc.ca](http://www.douglas.qc.ca)**

The Douglas is a world-class institute affiliated with McGill University and the World Health Organization. It treats patients with mental illnesses and offers them hope for recovery. Its teams of specialists and researchers are continually advancing scientific knowledge, integrating it into patient care and sharing it with the community to raise awareness and destigmatize mental illness.

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