Mark Your Calendar

All educational and family support meetings are held at St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, 4007 Main Street, Amherst (near the intersection of Main and Eggert Rd.) Educational meetings are held on the second floor (main entrance at the back of the church). Support meetings are held on the first floor (church entrance at ground level at left rear of the building.) All Board meetings are held at 636 Starin Ave., Buffalo, 1st floor and members are welcome.

December
NAMI Board Meeting, Thursday, December 6th, 7 p.m.
NAMI Educational Meeting, No meeting in December.
NAMI Family Support Meeting, No meeting in December.

January
NAMI Board Meeting, Thursday, January 3rd, 7 p.m.
NAMI Monthly Educational Meeting, Thursday, January 10th
Library and Coffee Hour: 7 p.m. Program, 7:30 p.m. Guest: Ellen Breslin, CASAC, CRC; Director of Adult Clinical services at Alcohol and Drug Dependency Services (ADDS), Inc.
NAMI Family Support Meeting, Wednesday, January 16th, 7 p.m.

February
NAMI Board Meeting, Thursday, February 7th, 7 p.m.
NAMI Monthly Educational Meeting, Thursday, February 14th
Library and Coffee Hour: 7 p.m. Program, 7:30 p.m. Guest: Kim Griswold, MD, MPH; SUNY Family Medicine: “Primary Medical Care Access for those with Chronic Mental Illness”
NAMI Family Support Meeting, Wednesday, February 14th, 7 p.m.

March
NAMI Board Meeting, Thursday, March 7th, 7 p.m.
NAMI Monthly Educational Meeting, Thursday, March 14th
Library and Coffee Hour: 7 p.m. Program: 7:30 p.m. Guest: Karl Shallowhorn, MS, CASAC: “The Journey to Wellness: Keys to Recovery”
NAMI Family Support Meeting, Wednesday, March 20, 7 p.m.

NAMI Happenings:

• As the Holidays approach, Mary Kirkland, Tom McNulty and their cadre of elves are busy with “Christmas is for Kids” preparations. Their work guarantees that children and adolescents who have mental illness are not forgotten. No child is left out of the fun whether they are in the hospital or in treatment at BryLin, ECMC, at a shelter, in group homes, or foster care. Packages, carefully and joyfully wrapped, at WNY Children’s Day Treatment Center will be picked up by the agencies and the gifts delivered to their kids for a wondrous surprise.

• Erie County’s new Mental Health Commissioner, Ellery Reaves, assumed his position in November. He holds a dual role as “Consultant” Commissioner of Genesee County Mental Health.

• NAMI New York State held its annual Educational Conference November 9-11. Presenters included researcher Lisa Dixon, Principal Investigator for one of two independent teams conducting NIMH’s Recovery After Initial Schizophrenia Episode (RAISE) Program that seeks to change the trajectory and prognosis of schizophrenia through coordinated and aggressive treatment in the earliest stages of the illness. She has conducted a study of NAMI’s Family to Family which confirmed the benefits of the program to families of people who are seriously mentally ill.

Another popular topic was the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Model first developed in Memphis, Tennessee in 1988 to address the special challenges posed to law enforcement by persons with mental illness.

(Continues, “Happenings”, pg. 3)
At a recent conference Robin Murray, a researcher based in London, gave a talk about the potential adverse effects of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).

Considerable data indicate that chronic long-term smoking of marijuana is associated with the doubling of the risk of psychosis. Moreover, if a marijuana user has a common genetic variant in the catechol-o-methyltransferase enzyme (COMT), they are at substantially increased risk for the development of psychosis.

New data also indicate that frequent use of marijuana can also be associated with an earlier onset of schizophrenic psychosis than would ordinarily occur without the substance use. Data also suggest that the psychosis associated with THC use is more difficult to treat than that without such use.

Murray also reported on a new risk that is associated with more potent new products. Older, natural forms of marijuana contained a compound called cannabidiol, which is associated with calming effects and possible antipsychotic effects. In a new synthetic preparation of THC called skank or spice, there is a higher amount of THC, but none of the positive diol compound. Thus there are some important caveats to the prevailing view that marijuana is relatively harmless.

Editor’s Note: Marijuana use brings a clear-cut increased risk for psychosis, which appears to interact with a common gene polymorphism and which is increased with use of a new synthetic preparation called skank or spice. If a marijuana user has a concurrent mood disorder, the risks appear to be even greater. The one sure pharmacological effect of marijuana is an amotivational syndrome, and motivational deficits are one of the core components of depression.

Given the difficulty of treating the mood and schizophrenic disorders, a patient should not risk worsening their illness with marijuana. N-acetylcysteine is one treatment option that may bring about decreased craving for and avoidance of marijuana and a number of other abused substances, as well as being helpful for mood and negative symptoms in schizophrenia.

Supplement Helps Teens Kick “Pot” Habit: NAC Shows Promise for Cannabis Cessation in Adolescents

A recent study funded by the National Institute of Health found that adolescents with marijuana dependence were twice as likely to remain abstinent when they received the supplement N-acetylcysteine (NAC) in addition to counseling. NAC is an amino acid supplement often used for its antioxidant benefits.

Marijuana-dependent adolescents who received NAC 1200 mg twice daily in addition to brief weekly cessation counseling were twice as likely to have negative cannabinoid urine test results than participants receiving placebo. The study included 116 adolescents in an eight week, double-blind, randomized, and placebo-controlled trial. Differences were observed within a week after beginning treatment.

The proposed mechanism of action as to why NAC is helpful with this kind of drug dependence is that it has been found to regulate a cysteine-glutamate exchanger in the brain that gets suppressed with chronic use of euphoric drugs like marijuana. This regulation, in turn, eases the brain's chemical dependence and curbs the drug seeking behavior over time.

NAC is known for few side effects, is easily available over the counter, and is affordable. Additionally, NAC, a proven powerful anti-oxidant, has other beneficial health effects, such as improved liver function.

Cannabis is the most frequently used illegal substance in the world and in the United States the number of individuals with disorders associated with cannabis use is twice that of any other illicit drug. In spite of the ongoing belief that marijuana is not addictive, ongoing research suggests a different story. Smoking pot has become as normalized as smoking cigarettes among a high percentage of today's youth. Recent studies on adolescent drug use found marijuana to be the most commonly used substance with as many as 25% of high school seniors reporting current use.

This pattern of normalization with the risk of addiction (to which adolescents are especially prone) is distressing since the effectiveness of psychotropic medication may be drastically reduced for young people with psychiatric disorders who use pot. This group is especially vulnerable to addiction. —Edited by Sheila Le Gacy and Vanessa Watts, The Family Support and Education Center; TLS.


Thanks to...

Our wonderful NAMI Buffalo board members who stepped up to new duties as Mary and Lynne retired. They had big shoes to fill!

Sue Keppel for setting up our reference table and charts for meetings. Yours is a necessary job that we too often neglect to notice but would greatly miss.

Our refreshment committee for educational meetings. Your efforts are much appreciated.

Ann Ezzo and Mary Lou Bond for their help with membership.

Dennis Harkawik and Irene Turski for updating our NAMI Buffalo by-laws.

Congratulations to Penny Thompson and Mary Vaccaro on successful completion of another Family-to-Family class.

Welcome to our new Office Coordinator, Sherry Byrnes, who has worked diligently to make the transition into a new era for NAMI Buffalo.

In Remembrance...

with our deepest sympathy to those who’ve recently lost a loved one:

The family of Jeanne Aiple

The family of Genevieve Geibel

The family of Bill Milliken

Mary Jane and the Brendle family, on the loss of her husband, Joe

Pat Brennan on the loss of her husband, Bob

Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Christmas is for Kids
2012 marks 22nd year

Serving some 600 children whose holidays are spent in some form of care with psychiatric disorders, victims of abuse, depression, and other serious mental health challenges; this annual project is one of the largest for NAMI in Buffalo & Erie County. While some of the children have some support around them, many have little or none.

Chairpersons Tom McNulty and Mary Kirkland collect and purchase age appropriate gifts and goodies, round up volunteers to help with wrapping and delivery, and see to it that none are without some of the bright cheer that every child deserves at this special time of year--because Christmas is for Kids!

Gift cards and donations are always welcome. To donate board games, art supplies, socks, sports balls and equipment, beauty products, books, batteries, Bills/Sabres items, winter scarves/gloves/mittens, or electronic games; contact Mary Kirkland at (716) 832-4035.

Donations may be sent to NAMI Christmas is for Kids, 353 Parkhurst Blvd., Tonawanda, NY 14223

Recovery models and employment options for people living with mental illness; children’s issues emphasizing the recognition and proper treatment of childhood mental illness; Veterans’ issues; unique mental health issues specific to geriatrics and aging, as well as alternative treatments for mental health were also in the forefront.

Dr. Dolores Malaspina, of Columbia University and NY State Psychiatric Institute, received the Connie Lieber Award for her work and scientific theory that the risk for autism increases with the age of the father.

Saturday lunch included a talk by Randye Kaye, author of Ben Behind His Voices, and Ben’s mother. An autographed copy of this truly inspiring story of a mother as she struggles to save her son from the ravages of schizophrenia is now in our library for your reading.

NIMH researchers were in attendance with tables displaying brochures that explained the numerous NIMH studies available to us all. I was immediately struck by their willingness to answer questions and encourage hope. We will share an assortment of information about these at our monthly educational meetings’ information table.

- ECMC will soon have a “fast track” unit adjacent to CPEP for children accompanied by parent. It is an unlocked unit, entered through the emergency room so that children can receive psychiatric evaluations without the usual long wait.

These are a few of the hopeful, thoughtful, insightful happenings that may help to inspire us in the new year ahead.

Happy Holiday wishes to you and yours and may you enjoy the best New Year ever!

Marcy Rose, President
Irish Classical Theater Company (ICTC) Brings the Challenges of Living with Bipolar Disorder to the Limelight with Pulitzer Prize Winner Production

This past October, the Irish Classical Theater company presented “Next to Normal”. Playing to rave reviews, NAMI president Marcy Rose and Vice President Irene Turski attended the show and agreed that it was a powerful depiction of life when bipolar disorder touches a family member. Karl Shallowhorn, who features as our educational meeting speaker in March, agreed that the show was especially valuable because people could grasp in this entertaining rock musical, “the realities of living with the disorder while also connecting with the crowd.” (“Musical ends with tale of living a bipolar life”, Matt Glynn, Buffalo News; October 8, 2012) Shallowhorn knows whereof he speaks: he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 1981 and worked through his recovery to become a senior counselor who has authored a book on mental health.

The show produced a rare, open community dialogue on bipolar disorder—which affects an estimated 5.7 million American adults—and was a near sell-out for the last week of its run. Shallowhorn’s discussion on the show’s last day covered understanding the illness, its treatment and management, self-care, and a clear message of hope: the illness can be managed and one’s life lived in a high quality of health, and successful relationships and career.

Theater allows audiences to step beyond their everyday lives and to develop empathy for characters and situations that might otherwise be overwhelming or uncomfortable. Kudos to the ICTC for breaking down the stigma of talking about mental illness and providing brilliant theater entertainment as well.

We get mail...

Good luck and best wishes to the new leadership. God bless you for your commitment to the mentally ill population. This organization is a Godsend.--Pat

My name is Alyssa and I work at a community center. One member of our youth programs, Jessica, would like to learn more about bipolar disorder...for a project she is working on. She came across your “Links of Interest” page and found it to be very helpful. Thank you!

She also suggests this very informative article: “Resource Guide for Bipolar Disorder” at http://www.drugcoupons.com/blog/resource-guide-for-bipolar-disorder.html

Kindest regards,
Alyssa L.

NB: Thank you Jessica and Alyssa!

Hello,

I was the speaker at the (April) meeting, presenting information on Erie County’s SPOE and AOT programs. I appreciate the warm welcome I received and was impressed with the large number of attendees and the array of questions that were asked. It is well known that your organization remains well-informed about the issues and is a strong advocacy force in carrying the issues and concerns to those who are in positions through which systemic changes can be made. It is clear that you are rich in both informational and supportive resources.

I will be forwarding my membership...

Again, thank you all for your attendance at the meeting, and for your continued efforts to insure quality care for all who are weaving their way through the impact of mental illness.

Sincerely,
Juli Vanwoert

NAMI Members, Associates, and Friends! Please Take Note:

Because of changes in NAMI dues and the newly combined local, state, and national membership, you may receive mailings asking support for all three levels. Your contribution will do the most continuing good locally when it is directed to our local office. Our mail and other outreach information to you will always say “NAMI in Buffalo & Erie County” in the heading and include our Buffalo return address. Membership renewal reminders will only come from the NAMI in Buffalo & Erie County office.

We are grateful for your support of our local efforts and hope this will help you to easily identify which NAMI level will receive your donation. As always, thank you for your generosity.
Cancer and Injuries
More Likely in People with Serious Mental Illness
Johns Hopkins Medicine  July 18, 2012

Newswise - People with serious mental illness - schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and disabling depression - are 2.6 times more likely to develop cancer than the general population, new Johns Hopkins research suggests.

The study’s findings, published this month in the journal Psychiatric Services, raise questions about whether patients burdened with serious mental illness are receiving appropriate cancer screenings and preventive care related to risk factors for cancer, such as smoking.

“The increased risk is definitely there, but we’re not entirely sure why,” says study leader Gail L. Daumit, M.D., M.H.S., an associate professor of medicine and psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. “Are these people getting screened? Are they being treated? Something’s going on.”

In a separate study, published online last month in the journal Injury Prevention, Daumit found that people with serious mental illness were nearly twice as likely to end up in a hospital’s emergency room or inpatient department suffering from an injury than the general population and about 4.5 times more likely to die from their injuries.

Daumit says roughly 5 percent of Americans have a serious mental illness, and this group is known to be two to three times more likely to die prematurely than those without disabling psychiatric problems. A small proportion of the higher risk, she says, can be attributed to the higher risks of suicide and homicide victimization in this population, but those factors do not account for most of the disparity. The top causes of death are cardiovascular disease and cancer, the same top causes of death for those without serious mental illness.

Daumit, a practicing internist, speculates that this population is “falling through the cracks.”

In the first study, Daumit’s team looked at data from 3,317 Maryland Medicaid beneficiaries with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, determining whether they developed cancer between 1994 and 2004 and what type of cancer they had. They found that patients with schizophrenia, when compared to the general population, were more than 4.5 times more likely to develop lung cancer, 3.5 times more likely to develop colorectal cancer and nearly three times more likely to develop breast cancer. People with bipolar disorder experienced similarly high risk for lung, colorectal and breast cancer. There were no racial differences in who developed cancer in this group, whose average age was between 42 and 43 years.

Daumit says one reason for the elevated risk of lung cancer could be smoking, which is more prevalent in people with serious mental illnesses. She also speculates that the breast cancer risk could be related to the fact that women with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder are less likely to have children, and childbearing is believed to reduce breast cancer risk. Also, some psychotropic medications can increase levels of the hormone prolactin, a factor that has been linked to breast cancer. The colorectal cancer risk, she says, could be related to lifestyle issues, such as smoking, lack of physical activity and a diet lacking fruits and vegetables.

Daumit says more study is needed on the role of behavioral and pharmacological factors in increased cancer risk among people with serious mental illness, and the extent to which this population receives appropriate cancer screening and treatment. She says mental health providers and primary care physicians must work together to promote screening as well as to reduce modifiable risk factors such as smoking among this group.

In the second study, Daumit and her colleagues looked at similar Maryland Medicaid data from 1994 through 2001 in search of other patterns. They found that over the seven-year period, 43 percent of the 6,234 people with serious mental illness in the group studied were seen at a hospital emergency department or admitted with an injury. Among the members of the study group with any injury, 42 percent were injured once, 23 percent twice, 25 percent three to five times and 10 percent six or more times.

(continues next column)

We Want to Stay in Touch!

Please send an e-mail (with your name) to our new address so we can be sure your information is updated and current in our records:

NAMIBuffaloNY@gmail.com

Also note our new mailing address:
P.O. Box 146, Buffalo, NY 14223
and phone: (716) 226-6264
Superficial injuries, open wounds and sprains were the types of injuries most frequently experienced by those in the study. Poisoning and burns were the least frequent types of injuries. Daumit says the results suggest that people with serious mental illness appear to be at heightened risk for both intentional and unintentional injury, and the types of injuries are mostly consistent with falls and minor violence.

People with serious mental illness are more likely to have substance abuse problems, and being under the influence of drugs or alcohol can increase injury risk, as can being in a location where illegal drugs are sold, Daumit says. But substance abuse rates don’t explain all of the increased risk, she says.

Another factor that may be at play, she says, is low socioeconomic status, which is also associated with mental illness and injury risk. She and her team say that environmental risk factors related to poverty that could put people with serious mental illness at increased risk of injury include unsafe housing (without appropriate railings to prevent falls, for example) and poorly maintained neighborhoods (such as those lacking sidewalks).

“Just as this population has other medical risks, injury requiring acute medical attention in the emergency department is common and we should consider this when we are looking at the overall care of the patient,” Daumit says.

Doctors, she says, need to think about injury risk when counseling patients with serious mental illness and their caregivers. She recommends caregivers touch on such things such as the use of bicycle and motorcycle helmets, safe firearm storage and fall prevention.

In addition, she says, physicians should evaluate and address side effects from psychotropic medications such as dizziness, which may lead to unintentional injury.

Other Johns Hopkins researchers involved in the Psychiatric Services study include Emma Elizabeth McGinty, M.S.; Yiyi Zhang, Ph.D.; Eliseo Guallar, M.D., Dr.P.H.; Daniel E. Ford, M.D., M.P.H.; Donald Steinwachs, Ph.D.; and Lisa B. Dixon, M.D., M.P.H. Daumit, Steinwachs, McGinty and Susan P. Baker, M.P.H., were involved in the Injury Prevention paper.
New or Renewing Members

(2) Anonymous
Jan Ables-Register, in honor of Phyllis Ables
Allison Andrews
Brenda Battleson
Richard Bennett, MD
Victoria Besseghini, MD
Gail Camilleri, in honor of John Camilleri, Jr.
Marie Cieplinski
Clayton & Amy Claxton
Anita Cohen
Joan Cole
Geraldine Cruz
Rosemary & Jeffrey Donnelly
Rosemary Duran
Francis Ferraro, in memory of Ann Ferraro
Maryanna Fezer, in honor of my brother, Andrew
Mary Foster
Ann Frazier
Colleen Frey
Joan Gruszeczi
Michael Hallett, MD
Anne Hunt
Indira Kartha, MD
Elizabeth Kruger
Barbara LaDuca
Jeanne Lodinsky
Donald Meek
Lisa Miranda
Lorraine Muehlbauer
Dr. and Mrs. Jesse Nash, Jr.
Joyce Orlowski, in honor of the Orlowski family
Bellamkonda Raghu, MD
Scott Regdos
Laurie Rivet
Charles Sabatino
Rebecca Severson
Steve & Doris Sielski, in honor of Mary & Lynne
Teresa Silsby
Jacqueline Sykes
Pamela Termer
Jane Urbanski
Diane Utrel
Susan Lord Wetherbee, in honor of all children
Rebecca Young, in memory of George W. Young
Deacon Michael Zuber, PhD
Walter Wilczak

Thank you, Christmas is for Kids’ generous donors

Santa’s Circle
$100-249

Douglas Easton
Josie L. Olympia, MD
Philippa Solomon
John Teach, III

Friends
$1-249

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Rob Beach
Carol Beback
Patricia Brennan
Judy Capodicasa
Catherine Crowe
Gerie Cruz
Mary Dendy

We invite you to join NAMI Buffalo & Erie County in helping us make a difference for people with mental illness and their families.

Mail to:
NAMI in Buffalo & Erie County
P.O. Box 146, Buffalo, NY 14223

Name__________________________
Address__________________________
City________________ State____ Zip______
Phone__________________________
E-Mail__________________________

☐ Membership $35
No one will be denied membership due to financial hardship. For those in financial need:
☐ “Open Door” Membership - $3

NAMI Buffalo Associates
☐ Benefactor - $100-$250
☐ Patron $75-$99
☐ Sustainer - $50-$74
☐ Advocate - $26-$49
☐ Friend - $1-$25
$_______ Donation (other)

☐ In Memory of -OR- ☐ In Honor of

☐ Please keep my membership/contribution anonymous.

I’d like to help with the following:
☐ Fund Raising ☐ Office & Clerical
☐ Phone Tree ☐ Legislative Advocacy
☐ Support Letters ☐ Speakers Bureau

Other____________________________

I’d like to be put on the phone tree to receive legislative or other alerts. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please send a copy of this newsletter to:

____________________________________
____________________________________
____________________________________

Memberships, contributions, and donations are tax deductible.
The measure of mental health is the disposition to find good everywhere.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson