



Neighbour Link

A newsbrief to keep in touch with the neighbours of Southwest Centre

Ongoing Engagement

Now that Southwest Centre for Forensic Mental Health Care has been open since June we know there is renewed attention, including some concerns about how our facility operates as we serve people on the difficult road to healing and recovery from a mental illness. We believe that ongoing engagement with you, our closest neighbours, is important. You have an established community and we want to be a responsive part of it.

In this spirit, we are sending this newsbrief to address questions and concerns we have heard. We also extend to you an invitation to a neighbourhood meeting where we are most pleased to have direct conversation with you about your information needs and ideas, and the work of our teams. Please see the back page of this publication.

In the meantime, if you have general inquiries or concerns please do not hesitate to call our patient relations coordinator at 519 646-6100 ext. 64727. If you have an immediate issue or concern related to safety onsite please contact our security office at 519 646-6100 ext. 44555.

You can also contact me to talk about any aspect of our care and service.

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Southwest Centre - A Smoke Free-Facility

As part of St. Joseph's commitment to supporting our patients, staff and visitors, Southwest Centre is a designated smoke-free facility, which includes the building and the grounds. Below are some common questions and answers.

Q - Why is the Southwest Centre for Forensic Mental Health Care a smoke-free facility?

A - Southwest Centre is St. Joseph's first site to go completely smoke-free. Following in the footsteps of many other hospitals and institutions in the province, St. Joseph's is making a commitment to improve the health and well-being of our patients, visitors and staff by providing safe and smoke-free environments.

Q - What does this mean for patients, staff and visitors?

A - Patients, staff, families and visitors will not be permitted to smoke anywhere in the building or anywhere on hospital grounds. Designated smoking areas do not exist on the property; both staff and patients who wish to smoke will need to do so off-site.

Q - What kind of support is available for staff and patients who wish to quit?

A - For patients, individualized clinical assessments are part of a care plan and the opportunity for smoking cessation is discussed and if chosen, supported. St. Joseph's also provides support for any staff member who might wish to quit or manage their smoking habits.

Q - Are staff and patients allowed to smoke beside the road?

A - Yes. The roadside is considered public property and off hospital grounds. Staff and patients can legally smoke roadside should they choose to do so. All patients who choose to smoke on the roadside or other public places are permitted to be in the community and should be treated respectfully, as with all our patients and staff.

Q - Are passes being given out to patients for the purpose of smoking?

A - No. Passes are issued by a person's care team based on their recovery progress. Community privileges are given based on a yearly assessment by the Ontario Review Board. (See "How People Access the Community")

Q - What can I do if I see unsafe behavior from those smoking roadside?

A - If you would like to report a safety concern at our facility, please contact hospital security at 519 646-6100 ext. 44555. If you would like to speak to someone regarding a general issue please contact our patient relations coordinator at 519 646-6100 ext. 64727.



Understanding “Not Criminally Responsible”

When a person is found Not Criminally Responsible (NCR), they are placed under the disposition of the Ontario Review Board (ORB), an independent tribunal, and are often placed into the care of a forensic mental health facility.

The term NCR is a court verdict stating that at the time an individual committed an illegal act, he or she was suffering from serious mental illness rendering the individual incapable of understanding the nature, quality and consequences of the act, or knowing that it was wrong.

Patients at Southwest Centre have been declared either unfit to stand trial or have been found NCR for the crime they have committed on account of a mental illness.

Dr. Craig Beach, physician leader of St. Joseph’s Forensic Psychiatry Program explains, “If an accused is deemed NCR, he or she is in need of mental health care. It would be inappropriate to imprison the individual because the person is not guilty of committing a crime.”

It is important to know, adds, Dr. Beach, “most people suffering from a mental illness will never come into contact with the law. And that the vast majority of NCR patients have been involved in less serious/non-violent acts as opposed to more serious crimes.”



Dr. Craig Beach

Understanding “Stigma”

People who have a mental illness often face “stigma” or negative stereotypes. Patients receiving care and treatment for a mental illness within a forensic facility are often subject to the “double stigma” of having a mental illness *and* coming into conflict with the judicial system. This sheds a further negative shadow on those seeking treatment, which Dr. Beach knows all too well is the result of inaccurate public perceptions.

“Unfortunately, the media has focused on and sensationalized a number of high profile NCR cases, painting a skewed and inaccurate picture of the relationship between violence and mental illness”, says Dr. Beach. “This further heightens the stigma, which presents another obstacle for people seeking the mental health treatment they need and deserve.”

At the Southwest Centre, care teams have the opportunity to help and advocate for some of society’s most vulnerable, marginalized and stigmatized individuals. Through intensive work and rehabilitation, patients are able to develop the skills and supports needed to successfully reintegrate back into their communities, managing their illness and returning to a full and meaningful life.

What can you do?

The Canadian Mental Health Association suggests using the “STOP” criteria to recognize attitudes and actions that continue the stigma of mental health issues. Ask yourself if what you hear:

- Stereotypes people with mental health conditions (that is, assumes they are all alike rather than individuals)?
- Trivializes or belittles people with mental health conditions and/or the condition itself?
- Offends people with mental health conditions by insulting them?
- Patronizes people with mental health conditions by treating them as if they were not as good as other people?

How People Access the Community

The patients at Southwest Centre are granted permission to leave the hospital based on several factors.

Initially the ORB holds an annual hearing for a patient that determines the individual's maximum level of privilege, if any. From there, the teams at Southwest Centre review the patient's clinical status and as part of their rehabilitation plan the patient's community access is put into place and is safely and gradually increased, up to the level granted by the ORB.

As a person moves through their rehabilitation journey they will transition through different areas of the hospital and then eventually outside of the hospital. For example, a patient will start on their unit, where their private room is located, and progress to access more public areas throughout the building, then to internal courtyards followed by grounds access and then off-grounds privileges. This is all part of a patient's care plan, helping them return to successful community living.

Former forensic patient, now author, speaker and educator Brett Batten shares his story...

The Real Face of Forensic Mental Health Care

By Brett C Batten

My experience with mental health has been a lifelong journey and began when I was fifteen years old. In my thirties I spent three years in correctional institutions and another two as an inpatient in St. Joseph's Forensic Psychiatry Program.

The forensic system was for me a necessary hardship. As I look back with freedom I see forensic care afforded me with health I last possessed as a child. Beyond that, many people at St. Joseph's have provided me with dreams and continue to assist me in realizing them. I did not wake up one day and decide to be an advocate. I was supported as I stumbled into it.



I have abandoned my anonymity in the hope that I might change people's perception of mental illness even when it intersects with the law. As humans we make mistakes, some more serious than others, but everyone has the right to learn from that mistake, grow from it and change. Seven years ago, I was in hospital, now I am in the early stages of publishing a book about my experiences. My story is one many share but few talk about. I have chosen to reveal myself because we need to talk about mental illness. There are too many images and misconceptions tattooed to our psyches.

Often those who fuel stigma are only exposed to their conceptions of mental illness and forensic psychiatry through media. The images from headlines and movies sit next to mental illness every day. Mental illness is in our neighbourhoods, workplaces and schools. We are surrounded every day. Statistics show that one in five Canadians suffer from a mental illness and the World Health Organization says by the year 2020 depression will be the single biggest medical burden on health. When we see a person with a cast on a broken bone we can understand it. The majority of mental illness is invisible to the eye. You will usually have no clue the person at the table next to you has depression, schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

"It is difficult not to form opinions but we need to guard that they don't become beliefs."

We all see the headlines and are shocked and bewildered by the actions of individuals sometimes found Not Criminally Responsible. For each case that grabs a headline there are hundreds that are mostly

uneventful. People may have ideas, images and feelings about certain individuals found Not Criminally Responsible through the narrow exposure of media. It is difficult not to form opinions but we need to guard that they don't become beliefs.

I have been in several hospitals for varying lengths of time. I have been arrested, incarcerated, judged, found guilty and found Not Criminally Responsible. My circumstances have always been different but my mental illness has been a constant. I would have loved to forgo some of my journey but the potholes make us pay attention - as much as the lines on the road.



Brett with Health Minister, Deb Matthews and Ontario Premier, Kathleen Wynne

Brett Batten has been thriving in the community for seven years, was awarded the Champion of Mental Health Award in 2012 and continues to educate, advocate and write about his experiences.

About Us

Southwest Centre for Forensic Mental Health Care

Southwest Centre is part of the St. Joseph's Health Care London family, along with Regional Mental Health Care London, St. Joseph's Hospital, Parkwood Hospital and Mount Hope Centre for Long Term Care.

With 233,640 square feet of contemporary therapeutic space, Southwest Centre is making a marked difference for patients, families and care providers. As a provincial resource it provides comprehensive inpatient and outpatient services for individuals with a mental illness who have come into significant contact with the criminal justice system.

Southwest Centre helps St. Joseph's highly skilled team of health professionals care for people in healing environments that fosters dignity, creates hope and promotes individual growth, skill development and rehabilitation. As patients progress in their recovery, they journey through the specially designed facility; a balance between safety, security, privacy and observation.

About the Forensic Mental Health System

Forensic patients in Southwest Centre are individuals who have been found NCR or declared unfit to stand trial because of a clinical mental health issue, or referred for assessment by the criminal justice system. Forensic inpatient beds are managed under the jurisdiction of the ORB. The ORB annually reviews the status and progress of each patient.

When Patients Leave the Hospital

Individuals who have made a transition back to community living continue as outpatients through the forensic outreach team and remain under the disposition of the ORB. Rehabilitation continues within the community and includes supports such as vocational skills training. St. Joseph's teams work closely with other community agencies across the region to link individuals with ongoing support.

You're Invited...

As part of our community, St. Joseph's Health Care London would like to invite you to a gathering at Southwest Centre. We would like members of the community, especially our neighbours, to attend this information session and bring with them any questions, needs, compliments, concerns or ideas regarding the new facility, our role and our care.

Everyone is welcome!

Date: October 15, 2013

Time: 7 pm

Location: Southwest Centre Gymnasium

How Can I Learn More?

St. Joseph's can bring an educational presentation about Southwest Centre and forensic mental health care directly to you. For more information or to request a presentation please contact 519 646-6034.

To learn more about the forensic program including a virtual tour of Southwest Centre visit:
www.sjhc.london.on.ca/mental-health-care/programs/forensic-program

To view a video on Southwest Centre and the legacy of mental health care in Elgin County visit: www.sjhc.london.on.ca/mental-health-facilities#SWvideo