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For Immediate Release

International expert to address conference on complexity of mental illness in geriatric population

London ON - The Division of Geriatric Psychiatry, in conjunction with the Geriatric Psychiatry programs at St. Joseph's Health Care, London and London Health Sciences Centre, will host a conference today for health professionals focusing on mental health issues affecting the elderly.

Dr. Lisa Van Bussel, conference chair and physician leader with the Geriatric Psychiatry Program at St. Joseph's Regional Mental Health Care London, says: "The presence of complex health issues in older adults is becoming increasingly prevalent as lifespan increases. For mental health care providers and other professionals supporting the elderly, this presents a multitude of assessment and treatment challenges."

With regard to mental health disorders, depression is a significant concern for older adults; up to 15% of the population over the age of 65 may have depressive or emotional symptoms requiring clinical attention. Progressive dementias such as Alzheimer's disease are also of particular concern; approximately 8% of older adults have a progressive dementia, with two-thirds of those living in the community. As the population ages, the capacity for health care services will become increasingly pressured to care for people with these disorders.

Keynote speaker Dr. Benoit Mulsant, MD, professor and vice-chair, Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto and physician in chief, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, will be discussing "Pharmacotherapy of Late-Life Depression". Dr. Mulsant is well known as a clinician and researcher in the area of pharmacotherapy (i.e. therapeutic use of medications) in late-life.

A number of other health care professionals will also be presenting on a wide range of topics including suicide prevention, dementia care, psychosis, and problem gambling and addiction in older adults.

The Geriatric Psychiatry Symposium, this year entitled "Into the Light: Removing the Shadow Over Late-Life Mental Illness", is an annual event now in its sixth year. The conference will be held at the Best Western Lamplighter Inn & Conference Centre, 591 Wellington Road S., London.

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For more information contact:
Laura Dockstader
Communication Consultant
St. Joseph's Health Care London
(519) 455-5110 ext. 47368
Pager: (519) 649-9359