

## Three...two...one... Take-off!

The launch was a success! The Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Initiative (CCMHI) celebrated the beginning of an 18-month journey to help reduce the burden of mental illness on Canadians by improving consumer access to prevention, health promotion, treatment/intervention and rehabilitation services.

To kick off the Initiative, a reception was held at the Lord Elgin Hotel in Ottawa on October 6, 2004, bringing together CCMHI's diverse steering committee membership and invited guests along with keynote speaker, the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of State for Public Health. Also on hand to show their support for the Initiative were Dr. David Butler-Jones, Canada's first Chief Public Health Officer, Senator Yves Morin and Bill Mussell, President of the Native Mental Health Association of Canada.

"It was a real privilege for me to welcome such a dedicated group of people", remarked Steering Committee Chair, Dr. Nick Kates. "The reception was a great opportunity for CCMHI Steering Committee members to learn about one another's work and how each one of us plays a key roll in this collaborative care initiative", he added.

The evening included a tour of the new CCMHI Web site that had gone live earlier that day. The Web site will provide a venue for communicating information about

the concept of shared care and its evolution to a model of collaborative care.

The Web site will also identify the benefits to patients and their care providers of applying a collaborative approach to mental health care in primary care settings. "The Web site



Federal Minister of State for Public Health, Carolyn Bennett, addresses guests at a reception celebrating the launch of the Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Initiative.

is a great tool that we will use to share the information we collect along with our analyses of collaborative mental health care best practices", said Executive Director, Scott Dudgeon. "Stay tuned – very shortly we will be posting our research papers on the Web site. These papers contain the foundational information upon which we will develop a Charter and subsequent Toolkits", he added.

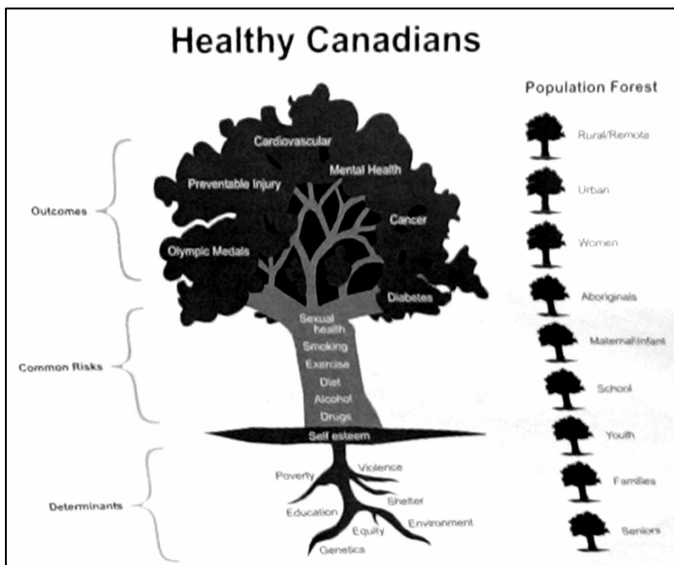
The timing of CCMHI's launch was significant as it was one of a number of events taking place during Mental Illness Awareness Week – a week that seeks to raise awareness of the level of mental illness in Canada; to reduce negative stigma about mental illness amongst the general population and health care professionals; and to promote the positive effects of best practices in prevention, diagnosis and medical treatment. The week is annually coordinated by the [Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health](#) and its member organizations.

Looking back on the evening, Minister Bennett's remarks set the tone and provided an encouraging start to the Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Initiative. Her remarks focused on the utility of taking a collaborative approach to health care and the importance of putting the patient or citizen at the centre. She drew on her personal experience as a health care professional, and emphasized the importance of embracing an interdisciplinary way of doing business.

Minister Bennett observed that in front of Women's College Hospital – a downtown Toronto hospital where she has acted as president of the Medical Staff Association – stands a statue with an important message: Non quo sed quo modo.

Translated, it means: 'It's not what we do but how we do it'. "It's really about a different approach of putting the patient first", said Minister Bennett. She added that there was no one approach that would fit all circumstances – that it depends on specific geographies and populations.

To emphasize her point, Minister Bennett held up a "Healthy Canadians" tree – a diagram depicting a tree with roots, a trunk and branches. The forest symbolizes Canada's varied population of rural/remote communities, urban settlements, women, aboriginals, schools, mothers and infants, youth, families and seniors. The roots signify determinants of health: poverty, violence, the environment, shelter, equity, education and genetics, which come through the forest floor of self-esteem. The trunk represents common risk factors such as sexual health, smoking, exercise, diet, alcohol and drugs, and the branches represent the outcomes for diseases such as diabetes, cancer, mental illness, cardiovascular disease and preventable injuries. For this vision of healthy Canadians to become a reality, these tree elements need to be acknowledged and their interconnectedness understood.



A Tree Diagram that keynote speaker the Honourable Carolyn Bennett used to explain the determinants, common risks and outcomes that affect the health of Canadians.

The Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Initiative is off to a good start. From now until the end of March 2006, twelve member associations will work together to identify better ways of delivering mental health services in primary care settings. And at the end of the Initiative, there will be a Charter — a shared vision of collaborative mental health care for Canada – and practical tools to support the development of collaborative care initiatives. ■