

# SECOND OPINION

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Autumn 2007

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## Psychiatric Patients Rights Pamphlet Released

-Brian Eaton

Second Opinion Society has published its new Psychiatric Patients Rights pamphlet, and will shortly be distributing it throughout the territory. Originally published in 1996, and revised in 2000, the new version incorporates changes in the law brought about by the Consent and Capability and Adult Decision-Making legislation that's come into effect.

Put together by Whitehorse lawyer Ryan McCallion with the aid of funding from the Yukon Law Foundation, the pamphlet is a resource that will prove valuable to anyone who has been confined under the Mental Health Act, and is unsure of what their rights are.

In an easy, readable format, the handbook details the distinction between voluntary and involuntary admission, discusses consent to treatment and the role of substitute decision-makers, and the role of the Capability and Consent Board and hearings under its jurisdiction, among other topics.

The pamphlet is being printed with the assistance of Yukon Health and Social Services, and will be distributed territory-wide. To secure a copy for yourself or your organization, phone SOS at 667-2037 in Whitehorse.

## Velma Becker

Velma Becker (Robertson) passed away in Whitehorse General Hospital on the afternoon of November 22, after a struggle with cancer. A long-time Whitehorse resident, Velma had been involved with Second Opinion Society for many years.

Born April 8, 1935, Velma came to the Yukon as a child in 1940 from Cranbrook, B.C., and grew up in Whitehorse in the 'fifties. She knew a number of historical Yukon figures, among them Victoria Faulkner, after whom Whitehorse's women's' centre is named.

Velma could truly be considered among the Yukon's Colourful Five Per Cent, as anyone who knew her could well attest. She was a past member of the Order of the Eastern Star, and actively involved at one time or another with Grace Church, the Salvation Army, Mary House, Victoria Faulkner Women's' Centre and Second Opinion Society.

A celebration of Velma's life was held on December 13 at Mary House, with the participation of Sacred Heart Church's Father Claude Gosselin, who was with Velma at the end of her struggle.

## New Advocate Service At SOS

With the help of funding from United Way Yukon, Second Opinion Society is now able to offer a mental health advocate service until next March..

Lyall Herrington began working with SOS on October 9, and will be available to help people with mental health issues who need help with short-term crisis support and advocacy.

His past experience includes working with Grey Mountain Housing Society in Whitehorse, where his advocate work included assisting tenants in the areas of family violence, mental health, tenant grievance issues and interactions with the judicial system, among many other areas.

He has also worked as a treatment counselor with the Aishihik Lake Treatment Centre in Haines Junction, and as an alcohol and drug counselor with the Lake Babine Nation in Burns Lake, BC,

Lyall is available at SOS on 304 Hawkins Street, from 11 am to 5 pm Tuesday and Wednesday, as well as half-days on Thursday. Drop-ins are okay, but it's often a good idea to phone ahead if you're needing his services, as his schedule is starting to become very full in response to the demand.

Lyall can be reached on his direct line at SOS, 667-2023.

## Hidden Enemy

-Anonymous

There you are again-no one is aware.  
There you are again, a cold and blanketing stare.  
Your hooded eyes glistening darkness and despair.  
The bitterness of a long and crooked glare  
Frozen on your face.  
The feeling of emptiness that could not be erased.  
Brittleness of your hair  
Could hardly tell of the scare  
to come so soon  
Like a blue monsoon,  
You're so deep and out of control.  
How long will you hold me? Will you ever let me go?  
We danced a long and tiring dance,  
All the night through we did prance.  
You seemed to lift me right off of the floor.  
My spirit so tired, feeling so poor.  
I didn't know what I should do, so I let go  
and melded into You..  
Turning and tossing me this way and that,  
smiling and winking, tipping your hat.  
My, oh yes--You did give them a show.  
You held me so close will You ever let me go?  
They turned their eyes and pretended not to see .  
Although You made quite the fool out of me.  
Moving, acting, controlling my soul  
Taunting my mind with thoughts of foe.  
As though I could not walk from this disdain  
Parade of shame ,  
I was labeled insane,  
Not right in the Brain. In and out of the doctor's control  
Force-fed poison, what a show.  
Anyway I am free now today.  
You didn't and You won't steal my life away.  
I hope, I know, I pray every day.  
An act, You wear a mask hiding away,  
Saving face until another day.  
A day that will dawn and all will see  
(cont.)

A new beginning, a new being inside of me .  
Not somebody to be lied to,  
Ridiculed and mocked free as a bird,  
Free to be heard. At least for now, at least  
for today  
I can say I will be okay.

We can escape isolation, institution,  
So-called medication .  
We must rise up together and stop forced  
psychiatry now today, and forever.  
There is a place of peace for all of us  
If we search enough we will find it.

## We're Now Accessible!

With the assistance of the Rick Hansen Fund, YTG's Solutions That Work program and Challenge Community Vocational Alternatives, Second Opinion Society is now wheelchair-accessible.

Cress Lindstrom's crew from Challenge worked on installing a new boardwalk for the entrance to 304 Hawkins, that is wide enough to accommodate manual or power wheelchairs.

The funding was generous enough that modifications to the interior of the SOS house can be made, including accessibility aids in the bathroom.

Our thanks are extended to Cress Lindstrom, Rick Goodfellow, George Green and Kim Hague for all their help with this successful project.

## The Trouble With Psychiatry

Writing in the current issue of Skeptic magazine, American psychiatrist John Sorboro had some critical things to say about his chosen profession, as illustrated by the following excerpts from his article. A complete reprint of the article is available from SOS.

The number of psychiatric illnesses in the DSM keeps growing and includes everything from jet lag to premature ejaculation. We are today in the midst of a veritable mental health pandemic. It has been estimated that over 26% of American adults suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in any given year. I am waiting for that number to swell to 51%, at which point I suspect those people may turn around and diagnose the remaining 49% as being "abnormal," which, statistically speaking, they will be!

...Indeed psychiatry has been heavily criticized for its self serving authoritarian agenda, its willingness to regularly deprive those it sees as ill of their basic civil liberties, and its past alliances with the eugenics movement and fascist regimes.

...As shameful as psychiatry's attempt at perpetuating the myth of "medical psychotherapy" is, these days it doesn't seem to matter much...Drugs are now the cornerstone of modern psychiatric practice. The amount of money spent on psychotropic drugs increased 600% in a decade and a half, from an estimated \$2.8 billion in 1987 to \$18 billion in 2001. Almost all of this increase can be accounted for by the introduction of new antidepressant and antipsychotic medicines within that time period.

...Regardless of the rhetoric that you get from psychiatrists who are profoundly uncritical of psychiatric research, Tom Cruise is correct that psychiatry needs more scientific grounding. No tests with any sensitivity or specificity exist to clearly identify those who psychiatry classifies as having major or minor psychiatric illness, nor do any tests exist that guide illness-specific treatments and objectively confirm positive response.

“Despite the lack of formal indications, ATAs were prescribed by this group of clinicians for many off-label indications in youth under age 18 years, including very young children. Neither evidence-based guidelines nor a consensus on monitoring exist for this age group”, the study continues.

The extent to which children are subjected to psychotropic drugs in Ontario recently came to light in a survey of government documents by the Toronto Globe and Mail. It revealed that 47 per cent of children in care at group homes and similar facilities were prescribed psychotropic drugs in 2006. This is more than triple the rate of drug prescriptions for psychiatric problems for children in general.

The Globe describes their situation: “With histories of abuse, neglect and loss, children in foster care often bear psychological scars unknown to most of their peers. But without a doting parent in their corner, they are open to hasty diagnoses and heavy-handed prescriptions. Oversight for administering the drugs and watching for side-effects is left to often low-paid, inexperienced staff working in privately-owned, loosely-regulated group homes and to overburdened caseworkers legally bound to visit their charges only once every three months.”

Yolanda Lambe, research director for the National Youth In Care Network, is supervising the completion of a three-year Health Canada-funded study. She says “A lot of people are using drugs now. There’s a lot of homeless young people who have been medicated quite heavily.”

Her research has found, says the Globe, “that not only were psychotropic drugs prescribed to a clear majority of the current and former wards interviewed, but most were diagnosed with mental-health disorders by a family doctor, never visited a child psychiatrist or another doctor for a second opinion, and doubted the accuracy of their diagnosis.”

In the US, it’s been estimated that there are 1.5 million children under 18 taking psychotropic drugs. There are no similar figures available for Canada.

## SOS Update

Summer is a time for relaxation, and the summer at SOS promises to be one that all are sure to enjoy.

We’ll be scheduling lots of outdoor activities, and your suggestions are welcome. We’ve planted our community plot at DUGS, the Downtown Urban Gardeners Society at the foot of the clay cliffs by Seventh Avenue and Ray Street, and volunteers are welcome and needed, to look after watering the garden and tending to the weeding of our plot. Various gardening workshops will be scheduled throughout the summer, and you can find out when they happen by keeping in touch with SOS.

We’re starting a morning running group, and there will be berry-picking expeditions once the season is upon us. Weekly hikes will be featured, and a fishing and camping trip is in the works for sometime in August. A music program will be happening on Wednesdays at 2:00 pm.

If you're interested in participating in our summer recreation activities, you're welcome to drop around to SOS, or 'phone one of our staff for further information on scheduling of events.

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*The Second Opinion Society is a self-help group offering alternative mental health information and support to people going through emotional distress or crisis, including psychiatric survivors as well as those who are isolated or want to learn more about mental health issues and alternative healing.*

*We work to develop accessible, non-intrusive alternatives such as peer support, peer counseling, recreational and social activities and wholistic healing and offer help through education, advocacy and access to basic facilities. We also serve as a community resource and a voice for people facing mental health issues.*

Contact us if you want to know more about the Second Opinion Society or are interested in becoming a member.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

