



Welcome!

This represents the Rotarian Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives' (RAGMHI) inaugural newsletter. It is our hope that this newsletter serves to familiarize you on our mandate, focus and more importantly to encourage you to become a member and take action to affect change in your community in support of mental health.

Our mandate

The Rotarian Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives (RAGMHI) aims to build an association of Rotarians who are united to conduct international service projects and to encourage individual Rotary Clubs to sponsor projects in support of mental health and mental illness in the communities we serve, and that serve to advance the objectives of Rotary.

Our group is committed to fostering international leadership, friendship, and service. We are action-oriented, and our membership is composed of Rotarians, Rotarians' family members, and Rotary program participants and alumni who have expertise and a passion for being active in designing solutions, creating awareness, and executing international programs to support the mental health of our communities and those with mental health problems or illnesses.

Focus on Children and Youth

There are many areas under the umbrella of mental health and mental illness that could benefit from the attention of this RAG and its membership. In order to be focused and have the most impact with the resources available, we have chosen to begin our work by focusing on children and youth mental health, specifically around suicide prevention.

We appreciate that different clubs and communities have different needs and this RAG's focus should not limit your club's (or individual) efforts in a particular area of the mental health system like you would like to change or influence.



Consider these facts:

- 1 in 5 people worldwide have (or will have) a mental health problem or illness.
- Mental health problems and substance use disorders are the leading cause of disability worldwide.
- Worldwide, over 800 000 people die due to suicide every year.
- For every suicide there are many more people who attempt suicide every year. A prior suicide attempt is the single most important risk factor for suicide in the general population.
- 75% of global suicides occur in low- and middle-income countries.
- Misunderstanding and stigma surrounding mental illness are widespread and prevents people from seeking care.

Source: World Health Organization <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheet/fs398/en/>

The rate of suicide in young people is a very important – and tragic – indicator of our collective lack of effectiveness in meeting the mental health needs of our children and youth. In Canada, for instance, death by suicide among 15 to 24 year olds is the second leading cause of death in this age group. In fact, three times as many youth (15-24 years) die by suicide than by all forms of cancer combined.

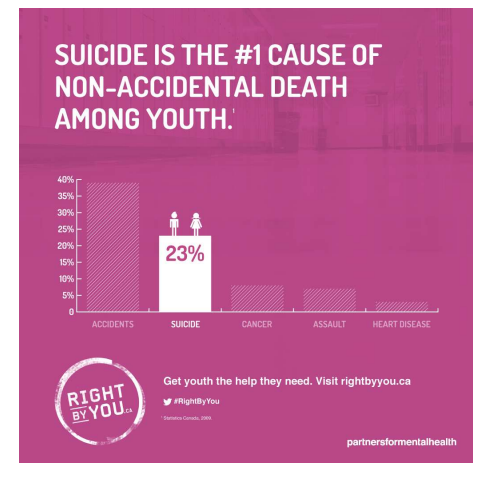
The best evidence available today suggests that the greatest promise in youth suicide prevention and risk management is in:

- Whole-community initiatives that integrate the efforts of individuals across sectors (i.e., mental health, education, health, juvenile justice, child welfare) and stakeholder groups including families and youth; and
- Meaningful engagement of young people to promote health and well-being and decrease risky behaviours such as self-harm.

Given the promise of a community based approach to suicide prevention, and the need for countries to address youth suicide prevention in a more rigorous and evidence-based manner, we encourage individuals globally to make suicide prevention a priority within their communities, and with their elected officials.

The Facts on Suicide

In Canada, 23% of young people die by suicide. A national campaign – *Right By You* – set out to educate and engage parents in communities across Canada.





Join Us!

Mental health is one of the last social taboos of our time. We don't talk about it, understand it, or support it and the result of ignoring it is too often tragic.

Despite the fact that mental health disorders contribute more to the global burden of disease than all cancers combined, and suicide being the most common cause of violent death in the world, it's a topic that is often overlooked. Mental illness and suicide can be especially tough to talk about given the complexity of the issue and a lack of resources. But it may be one of the most important conversations you can have.

Consider these facts from the World Health Organization:

- Over 800,000 people die due to suicide every year and suicide is the second leading cause of death in 15 – 29 year olds.
- For every suicide there are many more people who attempt suicide every year. A prior suicide attempt is the single most important risk factor for suicide in the general population.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15–29-year-olds.
- 75% of global suicides occur in low- and middle-income countries.

The hope that surrounds these disturbing facts is that suicides are preventable. There are a number of measures that can be taken at an individual level, but also at a societal level such as reducing access to the means of suicide (e.g. pesticides, firearms, certain medications), responsible reporting by the media, early identification, treatment and care, to name just a few.

Eliminating the stigma and challenging the stereotypes are actions each one of us can take, and that each Rotary Club can engage their communities in to help make a difference.

The Rotarian Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives is building an association of Rotarians who are united to conduct international service projects to reduce suicide. Too many people living with mental illness suffer in silence. Join the movement to change this. It is time to speak out and stand up for our own mental health and for those who live with mental health problems or illnesses.

Membership Benefits

By becoming a member of the Rotarian Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives you will:

- Gain information and insight into mental health and suicide prevention;
- Learn about initiatives in other countries that are challenging the status quo;



- Contribute to changing attitudes and behaviours towards those living with mental health problems or illnesses; and
- Join in fellowship with other Rotarians to work, share, educate, support, partner and act in support of mental health.

We must remember that directly or indirectly, every family, every community, and every business is affected in some way by mental illness. In communities where Rotary is active, you can play a critical role by promoting mental health!

RAGMHI Officers

Bonnie Black, Chair – PDG (2013-2014) District 7040 – Rotary Club of Plattsburgh, New York, USA

Mrs. Black is Director of Employee Assistance Services a program of Behavioral Health Services North in Northeastern New York. She is a Certified Intrinsic Coach, and a nationally/internationally trainer for ASIST, *suicideTALK*, and Youth Mental Health First Aid. She has been a Rotarian since 1989, a Founder of Friends of Theatre, serves as Secretary of the Town of Plattsburgh Senior Housing Coalition, and is the Chair of the Trustees of the Plattsburgh United Methodist Church. She has been employed in the field of Mental Health since 1994 although began volunteering as a North Country Mental Health Player/Facilitator decades earlier raising awareness of mental health and social issues in the community.

Bonnie has received many community recognitions such as, the United Way of the Adirondack's Volunteer of the Year and the Woman of Distinction by the North Country Girl Scout Council. She was named Rotarian of the Year by her club, awarded her first Paul Harris Fellow by her club, was the recipient of the Montreal Westward Rotary Club's Monette-Webster Service Award and, in 2016, received Rotary's highest award: Service Above Self.

Jeff Moat, Membership – Rotary Club of Hudson and Saint-Lazare, Quebec, Canada

Jeff is the President of Partners for Mental Health, a Canadian registered charitable organization that uses partnerships, public engagement and strategic initiatives to transform the way Canadians think about, act towards and support mental health and people living with a mental illness.

Jeff strongly believes that by galvanizing a community of supportive Canadians, we can transform our collective efforts into a powerful social movement that will not only drive positive change in the mental health system, but also create broader social change.

Beginning his career as marketing executive for Petro Canada's private label credit card, Jeff continued to build experience in the financial services sector as Assistant Vice President for Citibank Canada and



Bank One International and later Vice President of Marketing for Alterna Bank. In these roles, he was responsible for strategic marketing activities that supported brand building, customer relationship management, and product growth objectives.

Wanting to use this experience to make a difference and to positively impact society, Jeff turned to the not-for-profit sector where he enjoyed an eight-year tenure as National Director of Marketing for Canadian Blood Services. During this time, he oversaw all national donor recruitment programs, advertising campaigns, donor lifecycle management and brand building activities for the organization.

Jeff is a graduate of McGill University where he received his Bachelor of Commerce in Marketing and Management Policy.

Geetha Jayaram, MD, MBA, Vice-Chair – Rotary Club of Baltimore, Maryland, USA

Dr. Geetha Jayaram is a senior faculty member in the Departments of Psychiatry, the School of Health Policy and Management, and The Armstrong Institute at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, Maryland. She also directs a community inpatient service as an attending physician in the Department of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins Hospital and has maintained a solo practice in the Baltimore area. As a highly respected clinician leader and administrator, she has developed and directed a quality assurance program that is unique in psychiatry.

Additionally, as a community psychiatrist, her contributions to Global mental health have resulted in a sustained transatlantic effort to deliver much needed services to mostly women and children in 206 villages in rural Southern India, with a population of over 6 million households. Care is focused on the needs of female villagers and children. Her work is recognized by the WHO, and she has won numerous awards for her service, teaching, and publications.

In November 2014, she was awarded the prestigious Global Service to Humanity Award by Rotary International, being the only person in the world to receive it for global mental health efforts.

Rita Aggarwal, Programs – Rotarian of the Rotary Club of Nagpur, India

Ms. Rita Aggarwal is a Consulting Psychologist in Nagpur, India. She is also a human resource development (HRD) trainer and visits industry and businesses for various training programs.

Ms. Aggarwal has a Masters in Psychology from Ranch University. She holds her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the same University and has a Master in Philosophy in Psychology from Bombay University.



Before starting her private practice twenty plus years ago, Ms. Aggarwal was coordinator of Nagpur's Chaitanya Drug De-Addiction Centre, the first of its kind in Central India. Before that she worked on several research projects in psychology and was associated with various social work projects and institutions for many years in Varanasi, Bhopal, Hoshangabad, Mumbai and Nagpur. Thus, she has a long work experience in psychological thought and practice.

Stewart Valin, Member at Large

Stewart Valin is a Research Scientist and Chief Quality Auditor at Stephens Analytical Inc. – a private company with nationally accredited (CLAS cert 44) laboratories engaged in calibration of hygrometric instrumentation. At the Montreal General Hospital Research Institute he acted as laboratory technician for Dr. Michael Razminski researching in the biophysics of multiple sclerosis.

Stewart has a BSc, Cert Honors in Biophysics from the University of Western Ontario where his research focussed on the hemodynamic contributions to the formation of aneurysms and post-stenotic dilations. In the early seventies for seven years Stewart worked as an EMT and orderly at the Montreal General Hospital where he trained in patient care for psychiatry, emergency, as an ambulance technician and the burn unit.

Stewart is also a member of the board of directors for Polio Quebec (V.P.), Butterfly Wings Foundation, and the West Island Mission.

Michel Vezina, Treasurer - Founding and Charter member of the Rotary Club of Hudson and Saint-Lazare, Quebec

Michel joined Rotary in April of 2013 as a member of the Rotary Club of Montreal-Lakeshore and Chair of the Satellite Club of Hudson and Saint-Lazare. He was Chair of the satellite club of Montreal-Lakeshore when the Rotary Club of Hudson and Saint-Lazare received its charter from RI on June 12, 2014.

Michel was born in Quebec City but, as a child, lived in many cities across Canada and in Germany for three (3) years. He graduated from high school in Cowansville, Quebec, and graduated from the University of New Brunswick with a Bachelor of Business Administration in 1978.

Michel has extensive experience in the pharmaceutical industry where he has worked for Cooper Labs, Beecham Laboratories, and was a New Business Development manager at Marion Merrell Dow. In 2007, he decided to open his own company called MedLink Services, where he serves as President.