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Mental health clinics cover all the bases

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, mental illness is now the most urgent health problem in Canada. The most important fact to remember about mental illness is that mental breakdowns are of many types, and have many possible causes. Some of these causes, are physical, sometimes psychological and sometimes social.

In Halton, the North Halton Mental Health Clinic provides community based psychlatric service for clients in Milton, Georgetown, Acton and the surrounding rural district. The clinic offers psychiatric assessment and treatment for individuals and families as well as providing follow up care to those clients discharged from mental health facili-

The clinic is staffed by two psychiatric nurses, one social worker, one secretary, as well as three consultant psychiatrists. Although, direct client service is our prime responsibility, we also offer consultative services to schools, agencies and general hospitals in north Halton.

During Mental Health Week, May 3 to 9, the North Halton Mental Health Clinic is holding an Open House Thursday (May 7) from 2 to 5 p.m. at their Milton office at 53 Brown Street, Refreshments will be served and everyone is welcome.

The social stigma attached to mental illness is still so strong and generates such feelings of guilt that the subject is rarely discussed openly. Today a great deal is known about mental illnesses and how to treat them, although there are still areas which require more investigation and research before they are fully understood.

In general there are some basic concepts that help clarify and remove the stigma of mental illness. The facts are: - there is no single cause, no single illness. There are a large number of different conditions, some of which are serious, others transitory and very temporary.

- causes of mental illness can be physical. Examples are brain damage due to toxins or vitamin deficiencies. the causes may also be purely psychological or grow out of

interpersonal problems. - mental illness is never a question of failure or will power. To suggest that a mentally ill person should be strong-willed and "snap out of it" is the same as suggesting that someone with a broken leg should stand up and walk.

· mental illness strikes more Canadians every year than all other conditions combined, including Cancer and heart disease.

- almost half the people in hospitals in Canada are there because of emotional or mental iliness.

Minor emotional upsets are as natural as the common cold and they can strike anyone. Everyone has occasional symptoms and it is not unusual to feel unloved or inferior, suffer guilt, fatigue, tension, fear or anxiety. It is only when these symptoms persist or become more severe and interfere with daily life that help possibly should be sought.

According to Ontario health minister Dennis Timbrell community based mental health programs offer an alternative to in-patient hospital care. They have a proven record of success and provide a valuable service in the community. People who do not regulre hospitalization tend to respond more quickly if they are treated in their own familiar community setting.

The North Halton Mental Health Clinic is 100 per cent funded by the ministry of health, administered by the regional department of health, using office space in the Milton and Georgetown Health Units, as well as the Acton Community Service Center and the Glen Lea Clinic in Acton. Home visits are an integral part of the clinic's functioning, providing services to those clients unable to make office appoint-

For those interested in how they may be able to help, the Canadian Mental Health Association is a voluntary charitable organization, concerned with the mentally ill and their familles. Work of the association falls into three categories. - Social Action

- Public Education

- Community Service For more information on the Association, or if you are interested in establishing a branch in north Halton, contact the Acton Community Service Center at 853-3310 or the National Office of the Canadian Mental Health Association at 2160 Yonge Street, Toronto, phone 484-7750.

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