

New networking group provides help for abused women

By JACIE B. PALMER
Herald Special

One of the biggest problems for victims of Family Violence is the feeling of being alone and isolated. Often a victim believes he or she is the only person who has experienced the situation. Often it seems as if there is nowhere to go for help.

Beginning this evening, Jan. 8, the Committee for Improving Family Relationships is sponsoring a networking group for abused women. The weekly meeting will run every Wednesday evening from 7:30 p.m. at the Georgetown Hospital. Connie Karlsson, a member of the Committee, will regularly attend the meetings and can be reached at 877-2436 should you wish to speak to her personally.

This networking group is essentially a self-help group where abused women can meet, share problems and experiences, help each other and make new friends. Perhaps you are feeling alone and isolated in our community. Perhaps you think you're the only

person who feels as you do. Come and take advantage of this opportunity to meet some other women who will care about you. Not only will these women care - but they will also understand and not judge your actions.

You may not even realize you're being abused. Do you feel depressed for no reason? Do you live from day to day experiencing many highs and lows? Do you feel your husband puts you down all the time? Do you feel unable to cope with each day? Are the kids getting to you? Are you losing your temper far too often? Do friends tell you that you've made your lot in life and must suffer through the consequences? Do days pass into weeks and you often can't remember what's happened? Do you find yourself **e x c u s i n g** your husband or boyfriend's behavior? Do you find yourself compensating for his moods?

If the answer to any of these questions is YES, then you may



be a victim of abuse. You deserve a better life. You deserve to experience the high quality of life that is available to you. You need to be surrounded by positive and supportive people who will help you.

Yes, it is a big step to admit something might be wrong in your life. Yes, it is a big step to come and meet with strangers. But I can guarantee you that it will be worth your effort. You will find women who care and want to be there for you!

I recall the difficulty I had in recognizing I was being abused. At first, I talked of the relationship (which had ended) as being abusive. Finally, I'd put a name to what had happened between us. It was months before I was finally able to tell someone about the physical abuse. I can now talk about the verbal/emotional abuse. Even today I haven't been able to discuss the sexual abuse in detail because it sickens me! I know how it feels to not realize it was abuse that was affecting my life. Maybe you just have the feeling that there is something wrong in your life. Maybe you want your life to be better. Maybe you are just a woman who wants to find out more about Family Violence.

Don't miss the opportunity to attend the networking group meetings.

If you are unable to reach Connie and you want more information about the meetings you can call the Committee Chairperson, Pam Johnston at 877-8877. She will be glad to talk to you and tell you about it. As busy single moms these women may be out when you call, so please leave a message on Pam's answering machine. She will return your call.

Reaching out can change the rest of your life! Take that step forward!

Feel free to contact Jacie by directing letters to her attention at the Herald. All correspondence will remain confidential. Should you wish to speak to Jacie call the Distress Centre at 877-1211 and your call will be returned. If you are a woman or child in crisis or an abusive male wanting help call the Distress Centre or dial 911.

Halton residents to have easier access to AIDS testing

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT
The Herald

For people who want anonymous AIDS testing, there will soon be a testing clinic in Hamilton.

Hamilton General Hospital's sexually transmitted disease clinic is one of eight sites that the Ministry of Health has established in Ontario for anonymous testing.

The Ministry plans to open the

clinic by mid-to-late January, said Janice Benson, the coordinator of the Halton Regional Health Department AIDS project.

She explained that the clinics actually test for Human Immunodeficiency Virus, the virus which causes Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, (AIDS).

She said people interested in the anonymous testing are required to make an appointment beforehand by calling (416) 546-3541. A coding

system will likely be used to preserve the caller's anonymity.

Once the appointment is made, the patient receives pre-test counselling.

"The counselling is vital. As well, once some people talk to the counsellors, they find out they really aren't at risk of contracting HIV," she said.

According to an AIDS test supplied by the Region, people at high risk are those who've had sex with

more than one partner, a sexually transmitted disease, sex while under the influence of drugs, sex without a condom or those who have ever used unsterilized needles.

The clinic takes a vial of blood from the patient which is sent to the Ministry of Health. It takes anywhere from two to six weeks for the results.

The patient must then return to the clinic to find out the result and will receive counselling again, whether the test is negative or positive.

The anonymous testing is one of three different types of testing currently available, said Mrs. Benson.

Besides the anonymous testing, there is also nominal testing which is performed by a physician and requires patient identification.

The Halton Regional Health Department also offers AIDS testing which is termed non-nominal, said Ms. Benson. The Region asks for the patients name but the testing is done under code so only the doctor, the nurse and the patient will ever know the result of the test.

The Health Department also offers pre- and post-test counselling. "A lot of people are comfortable with this type of testing," she said.

The Halton Regional HIV testing is performed at three sites: 760 Brant St. in Burlington; 123 Maurice Dr. in Oakville and 251 Main St. in Milton. It's 100 per cent funded by the Ministry of Health.

For more information about HIV testing and AIDS, call the Halton Regional AIDS project office at 878-8113.

New drug treats Chlamydia

Chlamydia, a recently recognized sexually transmitted disease (STD) which cloaks itself by being virtually symptomless, has rapidly become the leading STD in Canada among young adults.

But now, a new oral antibacterial drug, which has recently received approval from Health and Welfare Canada, will change the way physicians treat Canada's biggest STD.

FLOXIN, sold in Canada by Ortho Pharmaceutical and McNeil Pharmaceutical (Divisions of ORTHO-McNEIL Inc.), has received approval for the treatment of many common infections including lower respiratory tract infections (pneumonia and acute exacerbations of chronic bronchitis), urinary tract infections, skin and skin structure infections, prostatitis (inflammation of the prostate gland), in addition to gonorrhoea and chlamydia.

It is the last two indications, however, that are causing excitement for physicians.

Chlamydia (pronounced "klay-mid-ee-ah") is the most frequently reported STD in this country and most often accompanies cases of gonorrhoea.

Serious health problems

Chlamydia represents a serious health problem in Canada because it can lead to conditions such as nonspecific urethritis (inflammation and irritation of the urethra), cervicitis (inflammation of the cervix), pelvic inflammatory disease and ectopic

pregnancy (implantation of the fertilized egg outside the uterus, usually in the fallopian tubes).

One in 10 women affected

Health officials estimate that three per cent of all Canadian women suffer from chlamydia, but in populations of young sexually active women, the estimated prevalence jumps to one in 10 women!

"We know that the reported figures on chlamydia are just the tip of the iceberg and the majority of cases are still unreported and more importantly, often go untreated because of a lack of obvious symptoms," says Dr. Richard Morisset, Head of the Department of Microbiology and Head of the Department of Infectious Diseases at Hotel-Dieu in Montreal. "Women are at the greatest risk because untreated chlamydia can cause infertility," he said.

"If you're treating gonorrhoea (which is more easily identified because it is usually accompanied by painful symptoms), you should be treating for chlamydia as well, even if you're unsure if it's present," said Dr. Morisset, adding that this is now the recommendation of both The Centre for Disease Control and Health and Welfare Canada. Health officials admit that the test for chlamydia is not a reliable indicator of whether the disease is present.

No visible symptoms

"We know that about 50 to 70 per cent of people with gonorrhoea

and chlamydia exhibit no symptoms, which means they are continuing to spread the disease ignorant of the fact that they are carrying it," said Dr. Morisset.

Even when patients are aware of the disease and given medication, they may not take the medication as prescribed because there are no symptoms to remind them of the infection. In the past, STDs such as gonorrhoea were treated with penicillin (often administered as an intramuscular injection), while chlamydia was treated with an antibiotic up to four times a day for 10 days. These varying drug regimens often affected a patient's compliance, in particular, having to receive an injection.

One week of treatment

Now, with this new drug treatment, compliance is no longer a problem. For the first time in Canada, there is a single drug available, called FLOXIN, which can treat both gonorrhoea and chlamydia effectively and quickly at the same time. This drug should greatly increase compliance for young sexually active people because they will only have to take one drug orally for one week.

"The tragedy of chlamydia and gonorrhoea is that they are so often left untreated despite the fact that early treatment can cure both diseases completely and quickly," said Dr. Morisset.

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GEORGETOWN LIONS ARE SEEKING THE **CITIZEN of the YEAR**

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The Georgetown Lions Club is again looking for the "Citizen of the Year", someone who has given unselfishly to the community.

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The Lions Club wants help from you in picking our most deserving citizen or group for 1991. Nominations are now being received for Georgetown Citizen of the Year. Please mail nominations with supporting resume post marked not later than Jan. 31, 1992 to Georgetown Lions Club, Citizen of the Year, P.O. Box 73, Georgetown.

The winner(s) of the award will be made known in March at a dinner to be held in the Lions Club Hall on March 2, 1992. The public is invited to attend this special evening. Tickets are available from Lions Club members.