



PRESS RELEASE

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Mental health experts from around the world go from “on-line” to “in person” in Montreal!

The International Conference on the Use of the Internet in Mental Health continues until May 16 at the Douglas Institute

Montreal, May 14, 2009 – The International Conference on the Use of the Internet in Mental Health began this morning at the Douglas Mental Health University Institute. Five guest speakers shared their experiences and opinions on the future of the Internet and its influence on practices in mental health.

Today, **John Grohol**, Psy.D., founder of the American Web site PsychCentral.com, which was one of the first of its kind to be created in 1995, gave a brief survey of how Internet use in mental health has evolved over the past fifteen years. **Helen Christensen, PhD**, from the Australian National University, talked about using the Internet to prevent mental health disorders and how it can even help researchers conduct on-line clinical trials.

Simon Bignell, from the University of Derby in the United Kingdom, spoke about his research project, which looks at the use of virtual worlds such as Second Life for teaching and learning in the field of psychology. **Michelle Blanc, MSc**, a specialist in Web marketing, gave her professional and personal point of view regarding blogs as support tools. **David Spiegel, MD**, from Stanford University in California, shared his analysis of the Internet as a means to organize immediate community responses after a large-scale traumatic event.

The Internet: An essential tool

Searching for medical or health information is the third most common reason why Quebecers consulted the Internet in 2008, after accessing e-mail and looking up vacation information.* Those who suffer from mental health problems, as well as their families, commonly turn to the Internet to find information on their disorders, to share their emotions, or simply to express themselves through personal blogs.

Mental health professionals have also taken ownership of this new tool to improve their practices. *"The Internet has become a common and widespread tool for everyone, including those of us who work in mental health. This conference will allow us to explore the new field of electronic health and discover paths towards new approaches in terms of care,"* stated Alain Brunet, PhD, the organizer of the conference and a researcher at the Douglas Institute.

A subject of public concern

This conference will address the most recent initiatives in information communication, on-line diagnoses, responses to traumatic events, on-line psychotherapy, as well as Web-based university training and research. "I think all participants will return home with a greater range of tools to more effectively help Internet users who are looking for precise and reliable health care information," Alain Brunet concluded.

***Source:** NETendances 2008, an analysis report from the Centre francophone d'informatisation des organisations (CEFRIO) in collaboration with Léger Marketing

Information and interview requests

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About the Douglas—www.douglas.qc.ca

The Douglas is a world-class institute, affiliated with McGill University and the World Health Organization, which treats people suffering from mental illness and offers them hope and cures. Its teams of specialists and researchers continually advance scientific knowledge, integrate it into patient care, and share it with the community to increase awareness and eliminate stigma around mental illness.