The fifth Shared Learning in Clinical Practice Symposium, focussing on *Therapeutic Engagement in Compulsory Mental Health Care: Challenges and Opportunities*, was held at the University of South Australia’s City East campus on 18 November 2013. The symposium attracted over eighty attendees including consumers, carers, academics, students and health professionals from public, private and NGO sectors. The event received overwhelmingly positive responses to evaluation questions posed on participant feedback forms. The symposium was a joint collaboration between the University of South Australia’s Mental Health and Substance Abuse Research Group, SA Health, Mind Australia and Southern Adelaide–Fleurieu–Kangaroo Island Medicare Local.

**Speakers and Presentations**

The symposium advanced key themes from previous symposia held in 2012, specifically that of therapeutic engagement in mental health care. The Shared Learning in Clinical Practice team recognised that therapeutic engagement, an integral but potentially complex part of professional mental health practice, requires further discussion and debate in an interdisciplinary environment. The symposium provided an opportunity for shared learning about therapeutic engagement through presentations from South Australian-based health professionals, academic faculty, consumers and carers.

The symposium’s morning program was facilitated by **Professor Nicholas Procter** (Chair, Mental Health Nursing, University of South Australia) who delivered a welcome and introductory address alongside **Ms Janice Hogan** (General Manager, Mind Australia – SA Division). Both speakers highlighted the importance of multidisciplinary events that bring together various strands of clinical practice and academia to advance mental health care. They urged that building trusting collaborations is essential to moving towards improved and positive consumer outcomes.

**Keynote: Why Don’t People Believe Me When I Say I’m Jesus? – Dr Conrad Newman**

**Dr Conrad Newman** (Senior Consultant Psychiatrist, Flinders Medical Centre Emergency Department and Senior Lecturer, Flinders University Department of Psychiatry) provided the first keynote address. To set the scene for the day, Dr Newman used a role-playing scenario to develop a sense of what it might feel like to experience acute mental illness and distorted reality. A key aspect of this keynote was the importance of language when communicating with an individual. In particular he discussed the utility of Dr Xavier Amador’s LEAP model (Listen, Empathise, Agree, Partner) in clinical practice. ([www.leapinstitute.org/health-professionals/](http://www.leapinstitute.org/health-professionals/)).
Moral and Ethical Issues in Compulsory Mental Health Care – Dr Andrew Champion

Dr Andrew Champion (Chair, Statewide Mental Health Clinical Network) followed Dr Newman with a presentation on ethical considerations in mental health care with respect to Compulsory Treatment Orders (CTO) and their use in Australia. Dr Champion began by highlighting the high rate of CTOs in Australia in comparison to other countries. He examined the various ethical dilemmas – including consent, autonomy, coercion, and confidentiality – and the limitations associated with predicting risk, which add further complexity to the issue of CTO use. Dr Champion also asked “who benefits?” from the use of CTOs (the consumer versus others), before presenting some possible suggestions for future ethical practice, such as early collaborative intervention and prevention.

Social Media: Impacts on Families, Communities and Individual Mental Health – Dr Barbara Spears

The second part of the morning program focussed largely on child and adolescent mental health. Dr Barbara Spears (Senior Lecturer in UniSA’s School of Education and national leading researcher into bullying, cyberbullying and young people’s positive uses of social media and technology) presented on the use of social media, particularly by young people, and its relationship with mental health. Dr Spears communicated the importance of understanding the online environment, highlighting that many young people today have “known no other world”. She detailed some popular social media websites and explained their use by children and adolescents. She also played a YouTube clip of Amanda Todd, a young girl who ended her life following extensive cyberbullying and who used the online environment to tell her story in a narrative format (www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOHXGNx-E7E). Dr Spears also shared her involvement in the Young and Well CRC, which is exploring the role of technologies in improving young people’s mental health.
health and well-being. Dr Spears reinforced the need to understand how we can embrace social media to support mental health and the need to provide young people, who have access to a large amount of upsetting content online, with someone safe to trust and talk to.

Therapeutic Engagement in Trauma and Complex Care with Adolescents – Mr Tim Crowley

Mr Tim Crowley (Complex Care and Trauma Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, Eastern CAMHS) continued the theme of therapeutic engagement in adolescent mental health with his presentation on mentalisation in complex multiagency work. Mr Crowley described Adolescent Mentalisation-Based Integrative Therapy (AMBIT) and how this can be used to develop a team-based approach to care. A key principal in this approach is forming a web of support around the therapist working with the young person in addition to the usual web of support around the young person. Mr Crowley explained that although working with families in his clinical practice is important, it is also about what is done internally between clinicians. Engagement between clinicians is integral to engagement between clinician and consumer.

Following Dr Spears’ and Mr Crowley’s presentations, participants had another opportunity to engage in open discussion with speakers from the morning’s second session. Working closely with young people can give rise to supporting their reconnection with social life outside of social media. Such actions are important in building and deepening the nature, scope and consequences of therapeutic engagement.

The Consumer Centred IAPT Team Approach – Ms Alison Bennett

The symposium’s afternoon program was facilitated by Mr Adrian Jackson (Associate Clinical Coordinator, Hallett Team, Eastern Community Mental Health Centre) with a focus on input from a consumer and carer. Ms Alison Bennett (Consumer Consultant with the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service at Flinders Medical Centre) spoke about the service’s consumer-centred approach to short-term follow-up treatment for people who have attended FMC’s ED experiencing emotional distress. In her role Ms Bennett has been responsible for conducting research into
consumers’ experience of the service through follow-up telephone interviews. She reported the positive responses that consumers have made regarding their experience with the service. Ms Bennett expressed how her own 15-year journey as a consumer makes her an integral part of the IAPT team. This reinforced one of the day’s key themes: the importance of involving consumers in the service delivery process. Ms Bennett also reinforced the importance of therapeutic engagement being more than a process between clinician and consumer, but between members of mental health teams and as something that begins at the team management level.

Kathy’s Story: A Carer’s Perspective

Participants at the symposium highly valued the opportunity to hear ‘first hand’ a carer’s perspective on CTOs and therapeutic engagement through an interview-style presentation with Kathy (surname withheld), a carer and close family member of a person with mental illness and Ms Annette Jones (Senior Social Worker, Outer South CMH, SALHN). Kathy described her feelings about the level of support received from mental health services, in contrast to the level of support needed, by her and her family member with a mental illness. When asked what she would like for her family member, Kathy described the importance of clinicians understanding “the person as a person – not just someone with an illness”. That is, showing genuine interest in understanding more deeply their experience of personhood, personal interests and future aspirations. The frank, honest and authentic tone of the interview reinforced the importance of working with family members and carers to learn how best to meaningfully engage the consumer. Consumers and their families gain significant benefit from the experience of being fully heard and understood.

‘What I have seen today and why this matters to me’: Consumer and Carer Perspectives

This panel session brought together multidisciplinary threads from the symposium’s morning program to discuss what therapeutic engagement means in the context of compulsory mental health care. The panel comprised Dr Barbara Spears and Mr Tim Crowley from the morning program, alongside Mr Matthew Halpin (Senior Peer Specialist Coordinator, A/Carer Connect Coordinator, Mental Health Directorate, Central, Northern and Southern Adelaide Local Health Networks), Kathy and Ms Annette Jones. The key themes discussed included aspects of recovery in mental health as an active process for people with a mental illness, achieving respect, well-being and a safe, satisfying life that is deeply personal and as a collaborative endeavour with services and clinicians.

Bringing the Threads Together: Questions and Discussion – Dr Peter Tyllis

The symposium was fortunate to have Dr Peter Tyllis (Chief Psychiatrist, Director Mental Health
Policy) attend for the entire day and deliver the closing address. Dr Tyllis summarised the key messages and questions raised throughout the program in the following way: the value and importance of spending quality time with the consumer and their family, acknowledging that being able to spend this time is a privilege for the clinician; the necessity to be consumer-informed, not just consumer-focused; the value and importance of collaborating with consumers, their families, and other services; and lastly, acknowledging that language can have a lasting impact on the individual. On this point, Dr Tyllis reinforced the importance of reflecting on how what you say next is going to impact on the consumer. Dr Tyllis highlighted the importance of opportunities such as this symposium, and the need to continue the conversation around the topic of therapeutic engagement in compulsory mental health care.

**Rating Scale Questions**

> When asked whether the symposium was **relevant to their role**, 86% strongly agreed with a further 14% checking agreed.
> 80% strongly agreed that the symposium has made a **positive contribution to their professional development** (the remaining 20% checking agreed).
> 84% strongly agreed that the symposium **held their interest**, and the remaining 16% checking agreed.
> Finally, 86% strongly agreed and 15% agreed that the symposium was **of a good standard**.

None of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with any of the four statements. This is an exceptional result consistent with previous Shared Learning in Clinical Practice events.

**Open-Ended Questions**

Complementing the positive responses to the rating-scale questions, attendees’ responses to the open-ended questions were similarly encouraging and supportive of the event.

**Motivations for attending the Shared Learning in Clinical Practice Symposium**

Almost all of the respondents (97%) described their motivation/s for attending the event. The most frequent response was that the individual had attended past Shared Learning in Clinical Practice Symposia (13 comments). Other prominent reasons included to support one’s current role, whether that be as a clinician, academic or student (12 comments); to learn (12 comments); to network (9 comments); and because the topic was of interest (8 comments). Sample quotes reflective of these themes include:

> “I attended the symposium in Whyalla and found it to be extremely beneficial so wanted to come to another.”
> “Relevance of topics for clinical practice and teaching nursing students.”
> “To be refreshed, motivated, to learn. To consider new ways to look at old problems.”

**Positive Evaluation Feedback**

To better understand the experience of attendees at the symposium, an evaluation form was provided, comprising four rating-scale and five open-ended questions. Sixty-four attendees completed the evaluation. All responses were overwhelmingly positive.
To speak with and interact with a group of peers."
> “Engagement in mental health – such an important topic.”

The most beneficial aspects of the Shared Learning in Clinical Practice Symposium

All respondents (100%) identified at least one beneficial aspect of the event, with many providing multiple answers. Many attendees flagged a specific speaker and/or their topic of presentation as the highlight; in particular, attendees noted the carer’s perspective (16 comments), Barbara Spears’ social media presentation (17 comments), Tim Crowley’s adolescent mental health presentation (10 comments), and Conrad Newman’s keynote (7 comments) as the most useful components of the day. Other respondents noted the opportunity for reflection and critical thinking as important (8 comments), as well as the opportunity for networking (6 comments). A variety of other beneficial aspects were noted, including the provision of a ‘safe space’ in which to discuss ideas and the sharing of information. The following quotes are examples of these key themes:

> “I enjoyed Dr Barbara Spears’ presentation, extremely informative information. We live in a world of social media, but as pointed out if used inappropriately consequences can be fatal to children and families.”
> “It made me reflect on the therapeutic relationship that I have to patients and the possibilities of learning new skills.”
> “I really enjoyed the presentations on social media and complex care in adolescents and found them extremely relevant to the current changes and expectations in and around youth MH services.”
> “Both Conrad and Andrew’s presentations were very thought-provoking and have caused me to rethink quite a bit – it was challenging and enlightening.”
> “Networking/connection with like-minded folk.”

Important take home messages from the Shared Learning in Clinical Practice Symposium

An overwhelming majority of the respondents (98%; 63 attendees) identified a key ‘take home message’. Specifically regarding factors that contribute to therapeutic engagement (22 comments), such as the importance of positive engaged language, spending time, and being consumer-focussed. Similarly, it was acknowledged that therapeutic engagement is essential to practice and to positive consumer outcomes (13 comments). Also widely stated was the need to engage and involve families/carers in the therapeutic process (12 comments). Another common theme was the use of social media and online technology when working with young people (8 comments). The remaining responses were varied and moved beyond therapeutic engagement specifically, such as the importance of collaborative, multi-disciplinary work (4 comments) and the use of CTOs in Australia (4 comments). Examples of these key themes are:

> “Language – the power of something so simple and how it is so easily taken for granted – a reminder of the link between thinking, feeling, and acting within a ‘power’ context.”
> “That it is really important to spend time with both patients and families to develop these relationships.”
> “Therapeutic engagement is essential in treatment with positive outcomes.”
> “We need to...listen to families and carers not just involve them when we need information.”
> “The potential role of social media to help mental health services better engage consumers and their families.”

Topics/areas for future Shared Learning in Clinical Practice Symposia

Over 65% of respondents (43 attendees) made suggestions about what they would like to see at future symposia and the suggestions were quite diverse. Some popular topic areas for future symposia include comorbidities (particularly
including alcohol use; 7 comments), young people (5 comments), social media (5 comments), alternative therapies/treatments (5 comments), the interface and collaboration between services (5 comments), and the current state of mental health professions (5 comments). Some examples of comments reflective of these ideas are:

> “Working with clients with significant comorbidities – drug and alcohol, gambling, physical health issues.”
> “Children 16-18 years as young adults and standards of practice to enhance mental health wellbeing.”
> “More on social media and its impact. The role of social media and its impact on adolescent mental health.”
> “Therapeutic ‘activities’ for clients admitted to a mental health facility, alternative therapies.”
> “CAMHS/adult mental health services – working together/less barriers.”
> “Ageing health workforce – who is replacing this cohort? Are they less skilled?”

**Additional comments for the planning committee**

Almost half of the respondents (48%; 31 attendees) provided additional comments, with the majority (24 comments) expressing positive feedback and thanking the organising committee for the event (“Very well organised and presented. All excellent presenters. Very topical and useful information.”). Some attendees (10 comments) offered valuable suggestions for areas of improvement, including:

> video recording future symposia
> providing tips for practice
> including information for non-metro settings
> improving the sound system
> including role playing and workshopping of ideas
> providing information about other services
> encouraging greater consumer, carer, and family involvement

These suggestions will be considered for future symposia.

**Future Symposia**

The 6th Shared Learning in Clinical Practice Symposium is to be held on Thursday, 27 March 2014 at the following venue:

**GP Plus Building, Alexander Street,**

**Port Pirie, South Australia**

More information is available from Lee.Martinez@health.sa.gov.au and Nicholas.Procter@unisa.edu.au.

The 7th Shared Learning in Clinical Practice Symposium will be held in metro Adelaide at UniSA’s City West Campus during November 2014. More details will follow as soon as they are available.

**Acknowledgements**

The 5th Shared Learning in Clinical Practice Planning Team was: Andrew Champion, Kate Deuter, Monika Ferguson, Philip Galley, Melissa Gibson, Tony Halczuk, Janice Hogan, Adrian Jackson, Annette Jones, Julie Murison, Conrad Newman and Nicholas Procter.

Mind Australia and SAFKI Medicare Local generously provided financial support for the event.