

## 3TS CONFERENCE

### SUICIDE IN MODERN IRELAND NEW DIMENSIONS, NEW RESPONSES

#### OVERVIEW

Holiday Inn Dublin City Centre, Pearse St, Dublin 2  
**12-14 NOVEMBER 2004**

#### OPENING ADDRESS:

- **President of Ireland, Mary McAleese**

#### INTERNATIONAL PREVENTION PROGRAMMES:

- **Dr Ella Arensman** is currently working as Director of Research at the National Suicide Research Foundation. She has been involved in research and clinical work in the area of suicidal behaviour for many years.

**Presentation: "Prevention of repeated suicidal behaviour: Efficacy of existing treatment programmes".**

An overview was presented of studies that have examined the efficacy of psychological and pharmacological treatments for people who engaged in one or more episodes of non-fatal suicidal behaviour, as well as a proposal for an integrative treatment approach.

- **Professor John Mann MD (USA).** Dr. John Mann is trained in Psychiatry and Internal Medicine. He has also obtained a doctorate in Neurochemistry. He heads the Department of Neuroscience at the New York State Psychiatric Institute and is Professor of Psychiatry and Radiology at Columbia University. His research employs functional brain imaging, neurochemistry and molecular genetics to probe the causes of depression and suicide. He is head of the NIMH funded Conte Centre for the Neuroscience of Mental Disorders at Columbia University, Director of the Stanley Centre for the Applied Neuroscience of Bipolar Disorders, and President of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. He has published 390 papers and edited 10 books on the subjects of the biology and treatment of mood disorders, suicidal behaviour and other psychiatric disorders. In private practice he specialises in the treatment of mood disorders.

**Presentation: "An International Perspective on Suicide Prevention".**

Suicide is a major public health issue. In 2002, an estimated 877,000 suicides occurred worldwide, representing 1.5% of the global burden of disease and accounting for 20,767,000 disability-adjusted life years lost. The yearly global toll from suicide in 2001 exceeded the total mortality due to homicide and war. Therefore, many countries have begun to implement national suicide prevention strategies. The major elements of these strategies have included:

- 1) reducing access to very lethal means for suicide;
- 2) public education to increase awareness and information about the causes of suicide, such as mood disorders, alcoholism and other major psychiatric conditions, and the availability of effective treatments;
- 3) education of primary care physicians who are responsible for seeing and treating the majority of individuals who come for help that are at risk for suicide;
- 4) educating gate keepers, including those in schools, the military, police and prisons; and
- 5) guidelines for media reporting on suicide to prevent imitation suicides or creation of so-called hot spots, such as tall buildings or bridges. This presentation will review the

evidence supporting the effectiveness of these major components of suicide prevention strategies.

**In the Chair: Professor Kevin Malone**

## **SUICIDAL THINKING**

- **Dr Paul Soloff:** Professor of Psychiatry at the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, University of Pittsburgh. With support from the National Institute of Mental Health (USA), he is engaged in longitudinal studies of the psychosocial and biological risk factors for suicidal behaviour in patients with Borderline Personality Disorder.

**Presentation: "Attempted Suicide: What lies Beneath"** - Borderline Personality Disorder is defined, in part, by recurrent suicidal behaviour. With a completed suicide rate of up to 10%, this severe personality disorder is a clinically meaningful model for investigating the psychosocial and biological risk factors for suicidal behaviour. In this presentation, we reviewed current research findings on demographic, diagnostic, developmental, psychosocial and biological factors as they relate to the risk of suicidal behaviour in BPD.

- **Dr Tony Bates** Principal Psychologist, Dept of Psychiatry, Trinity College, Dublin

**Presentation: "Conversations that keep us Alive"**

**In the Chair: Teresa Mason** Suicide Resource Officer

## **SUICIDE IN VULNERABLE GROUPS**

- **John Lonergan** - Governor, Mountjoy Prison, Dublin.

**Presentation: "Suicide in Prisons".**

- **Prof Eadbhard O'Callaghan** - St John of Gods, Dublin

**Presentation: "D.E.T.E.C.T." -** early intervention programme.

- **Sean McCarthy(Ireland)** Suicide Prevention Officer, South Eastern Health Board.

**Presentation: "Youth Take Two - Working with marginalised young people".** A project jointly funded by the South Eastern Health Board, National Suicide Review Group and the Waterford Youth Committee entitled "Youth Take Two" was completed in 2003. The primary objectives of this project were:

1. To develop self worth and self esteem
2. To develop coping skills in an emotional context
3. To combat depressive responses to emotional and personal problems
4. To challenge negative and self destructive behaviour
5. To raise awareness and identify issues that are linked to suicide and parasuicide
6. To identify relevant support structures and establish accessibility of these services for young people.
7. To develop practical skills and build confidence through an accredited course in film making.

Upon completion of the project the participants produced two short videos entitled 'Hurting' and 'Hurting Stories'. The first gives us an insight into young peoples' view of suicide whereas the second video presents us with the experiences of young people along the continuum of suicide.

Both short films were shown alongside an overview of the intervention programme targeted at a very marginalised group of young people, some of the outcomes and recommendations for the future. It hopefully gave delegates an opportunity to give their

views as to the viability of using the video in an educational context for people working with young people.

**In the Chair: Dr Abbie Lane:** St John of Gods Dublin

## **THE ADOLESCENT DIMENSION**

- **Carol Fitzpatrick MD, FRCPI, FRCPsych** is Professor of Child Psychiatry at University College Dublin and Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist at The Mater Misericordiae Hospital and Childrens' University Hospital, Dublin. She has a particular clinical and research interest in depressive disorders & suicidal behaviours in young people.

### **Presentation: "Tackling Tough Times" – Young People Coping with Mental Health Problems.**

"Tackling Tough Times" is a 7-session programme for adolescents who are coping with depression and associated emotional and behavioural problems. It can be used with individuals or groups. It aims to help adolescents to be better able to manage and control their feelings and behaviour, to realise that they are not alone in experiencing difficulties, and to enable them to learn from the experiences of other adolescents who have come through difficult times.

The programme uses stories recorded by other adolescents on how they coped with difficult times in their lives, and what helped them through "tough times". It uses a CBT approach, encouraging young people to try out new ideas for changing their thoughts and behaviour. It builds on their strengths, and encourages them to develop goals for themselves which are positive, clear and achievable. A concurrent session for parents is included at the beginning, middle and end of the programmes. A manual and CD-Rom cover in detail how to set up, run and evaluate the programme which is currently undergoing pilot studies. Available March 2005.

- **Dr Helen Keeley** National Suicide Research Foundation - is a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist with the Mid-Western Health Board, having trained in Ireland and the UK. She was previously Research Registrar and Deputy Director of the National Suicide Research Foundation and maintains her research interests there.

### **Presentation: "Deliberate Self-Harm in Teenagers"**

- **Joe Connolly** Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)

### **Presentation: "Alcohol in Teenage Ireland"**

**In the Chair: Prof Fiona McNicholas** Crumlin Childrens' Hospital, Dublin

## **ADVOCACY & THE AFTERMATH**

- **Theresa Millea** founder of the National Suicide Bereavement Support Network (NSBSN).

### **Presentation: "My Story"**

Transcript from this presentation is pending.

- **Michael Egan:** Former Garda Sgt, Michael Egan, has set up a training programme in the Garda College to train Gardai on how best to help families after a suicide death. Breaking the bad news is an important part of this training programme. Since retiring from the force, Michael has been involved in setting up of the "Living Links" programme. This offers Outreach Support to Families and Professionals. He was the first recipient of the Dr Michael Kelleher Award, an annual award given by the National Suicide Bereavement Support Network (N.S.B.S.N.) to persons, nominated by groups within the network and judged by the panel to have given outstanding service in the area of suicide bereavement support in a Voluntary Capacity (Michael received nominations from two different groups in 2004 also).

### **Presentation: "Bereaved by Suicide: Breaking the Bad News"**

One of the most difficult tasks that any person must perform is advising a relative of the sudden death of their loved one. When the sudden death is by suicide it compounds the difficulty and raises a number of issues concerning the bereaved person's response and our own ability to communicate effectively. Retired Garda Sgt, Michael Egan, presented his own experience in this field and on his involvement in this area of training

- **Professor Kevin Malone** MD, MRCPI, MRCPsych., 3Ts Project – Scientific Director, is head of The Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health Research, St. Vincent's University Hospital / University College Dublin, and Clinical Investigator at the Conway Institute for Biomolecular and Biomedical Research, UCD. He is Principal Investigator of the Ireland North / South, Urban / Rural Epidemiologic (INSURE) Collaborative Project on Suicidal Behaviour in Major Psychiatric Disorders. He has published over 60 research papers in leading international scientific journals over the past 10 years relating to suicide and suicidal behaviour. Professor Malone is a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and has recently joined the Board of The Irish Association of Suicidology.

**Presentation: "Suicide: The 3Ts Perspective"**

**In the Chair:** Ciara O'Connor – Console: Bereaved by Suicide Foundation and Geoff Canavan – 3Ts.

**SUICIDAL IRELAND – A FUTURE and OPEN FORUM DISCUSSION "QUESTIONS & ANSWERS"**

- **Derek Chambers** is the Research and Resource Officer of the National Suicide Review Group having previously worked as a Research Sociologist with the National Suicide Research Foundation. He graduated from University College Cork in 1999 with a Masters degree in Sociology after completing a thesis entitled: "A Sociological Account of the Rise in Irish Suicide: suicide as a symptom of the Celtic Tiger". His main interests are in approaches to the prevention of young male suicide and suicide prevention policy issues. He is currently acting as Project Manager for the development of the National Action Plan on Suicide Prevention.

**Presentation: Suicide Prevention and Irish Society:** In the French sociologist Emile Durkheim's seminal work on suicide as a social problem (*Le Suicide, 1897*) "peasant" Ireland was referenced as proof that poverty does not cause suicide. Over 100 years on, the case can be made for Ireland as proof that rapid social, economic and cultural change causes suicide – or at least creates the conditions in society whereby suicidal behaviour is more likely to occur.

Trends in and attitudes to suicide and suicide prevention have been influenced by the transformation of Irish society, especially during the past two decades. Considering the fact that suicide was a hidden problem, rarely spoken about until very recently, and despite continued high rates of suicidal behaviour, the current level of progress in developing suicide prevention initiatives offers some encouragement for future generations. A starting point in discussing suicide prevention in Irish society is the passing of the Criminal Law (Suicide) Act 1993. Since then, a National Task Force has reported on behalf of the Irish government (1998) and resources (although limited) have been put in place to develop suicide prevention efforts regionally and nationally. While the Task Force was a major and influential step in establishing suicide prevention on the public agenda it may be seen to have failed to deliver a comprehensive national prevention strategy. Work is currently underway, building on widespread consultation, to develop a National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention that will influence suicide prevention policy in Ireland over the coming ten years or so. This work is being conducted on a partnership basis between the National Suicide Review Group, Health Boards Executive and the Department of Health and Children.

- **Professor John Mann MD (USA).** Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia University and Director of the Conte Centre for Research and Suicidal Behaviour at Columbia University, also currently President of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.
- **Dr Paul Soloff:** Dr. Soloff is Professor of Psychiatry at the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, University of Pittsburgh. With support from the National Institute of Mental Health (USA), he is engaged in longitudinal studies of the psychosocial and biological risk factors for suicidal behaviour in patients with Borderline Personality Disorder.
- **Professor Kevin Malone MD, MRCPI, MRCPsych., 3Ts Project – Scientific Director.**

**In the Chair: Olivia O’Leary** *Journalist, Author & Broadcaster*

Olivia O’Leary has presented programmes for the last three decades on both sides of the Irish Sea- for BBC, ITV, and RTE. She was the first woman to front BBC 2’s Newsnight and also presented ITV’s “This Week” programme and UTV’s documentary series, “First Tuesday”. She has presented the BBC Radio 4’s Sony Award-winning series “Between Ourselves”. For RTE television she has presented a series of current affairs programmes including “Today Tonight”, “Prime Time”, and “Questions and Answers”. She is a former parliamentary sketch writer for “The Irish Times” and the book of her collected political sketches for RTE radio, “Politicians and Other Animals” was a best seller in Ireland this year. With Dr. Helen Burke, she has co-written the authorised biography of former Irish President, Mary Robinson.

**Closing Remarks: Noel Smyth** Chairman and Co-Founder of 3Ts Project

## **WORKSHOPS**

- **"The Black Tunnel"** a stark and thought provoking film by Puddle Films which had its debut at the Galway Film Festival earlier this year.  
**Presented by:** Joe MacAvin, 3Ts and Mater Foundation.
- **Bullying in the Workplace and in the Home:** Presented by Fr Tony Byrne and Sr Kathleen Maguire of the Awareness Education Office in Cabra, widely acclaimed experts in this field.
- **Spirituality: Fr Enda McDonagh** NUI Maynooth, Co Kildare – Papers for this workshop are pending.
- **Presentation: "Good Habits of Mind - Youth"**  
**Lynn Swinburne & Louise Monahan** (National Youth Council of Ireland)  
The Good Habits of the Mind Project is a mental health promotion initiative for young people in out-of-school settings. A partnership between the National Youth Council of Ireland and the Northern Area Health Board, this year long project was funded by the National Suicide Review Group.

The presentation provided an overview of the youth sector/out-of-school settings in Ireland, an overview of the National Youth Council of Ireland and the National Youth Health Programme, an overview of the Good Habits of Mind Project, outcomes of the project and the future of the project.

Background: A reference group was set up comprising those working with young people from the out-of-school settings in the Northern Area Health Board. This group have been with the project from the outset and have informed and shaped the project. A number of key informants from the services were also identified at the outset of the project and have also been involved in the consultation phase of the project.

- **The Rita Project: Prevention through Therapy** with **Kim Strouse, Founder & Director, Rita Project and Jennifer Mauro, MPS, ATR-BC**

Rita Project is a non-profit organisation devoted to using the arts to help survivors of suicide connect with the power of creation, and in doing so, foster transformation. Rita Project programmes include Rita Studios, Rita Exhibitions and Rita Workshops, all of which foster healing, assist with suicide prevention education and raise public awareness about suicide and the importance of the arts to mental health.

## **BEREAVEMENT: OPEN DOOR SESSIONS**

These one-to-one sessions will be provided courtesy of **Console and the National Bereavement Support Network.**

- **Theresa Millea**, Founder of the National Suicide Bereavement Support Network  
Working tirelessly to provide support to new and existing suicide bereavement support groups and information to the bereaved. Website contains a Directory of Suicide Bereavement Support Groups in Ireland, recommended reading and details of upcoming events.
- **Paul Kelly, Ciara O'Connor & Josephine Quinlan (Ireland)** Console - Bereaved by Suicide Foundation.  
The Bereaved by Suicide Foundation assists people who have lost a relative or friend to suicide and who would like the comfort and understanding of others who have experienced a similar loss. The aims of Console are:
  - To provide Counselling, Support and assistance to those Bereaved by Suicide.
  - To hold meetings to provide mutual support for those Bereaved by Suicide

- To provide referrals to appropriate professionals
- To facilitate Community Education and Training Programmes
- To Provide pamphlets and associated literature to survivors, and to be made available to appropriate professionals and agencies.
- To provide a library specifically relating to Suicide Bereavement to be made available to members and others.
- To liaise and exchange information with similar Support Groups, both Nationally and Internationally.
- Research: to define the true extent of problem of suicidal behaviour in Ireland.