

Media Release – March 19, 2015

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE SEEKS BETTER WAYS TO HELP PEOPLE WITH PSYCHOSIS RECLAIM THEIR LIVES

The International Society for Psychological and Social Approaches to Psychosis (www.isps.org) kicked off its biannual meeting at Cooper Union in New York City yesterday (3.18.15). More than 700 mental health professionals, researchers, and people with experience of psychosis are meeting for five days to share their experiences of working in new ways with people who hear voices or have very unusual beliefs. The conference was opened by Dr Pablo Sandler, Director of Mental Health Services for the NYC Department of Health.

Professor Aaron Beck, the founder of cognitive therapy, was the day's keynote speaker. Beck predicted that in years to come, psychotherapy, not medication, would be the treatment of choice for people diagnosed with 'schizophrenia'. Registrants from the United States, Europe, Asia and Australia also attended workshops on such subjects as Compassion Focused Therapy, Open Dialogue, Recovery and Psychosis, Hearing Voices Network, Hallucination Therapy, Supportive Therapy, CBT and Psychosis, Psychosis and Sexual Abuse. Keris Myrick led an in depth discussion of the evolving presentations of psychosis in the media in the United States in the last 60 years. Thursdays proceedings will feature a panel discussion on integrated neuroscience findings on psychosis featuring Brian Koehler and John Strauss.

The theme of the conference, 'Dialogue – from DNA to Neighborhoods' – emphasises that mental health problems cannot be understood by looking only at the brain while ignoring the social context. Similarly, attendees share the belief that the traditional approach of just diagnosing and medicating is not always necessary and sometimes counterproductive. Rather, collaboration, dialogue and understanding have proven most effective, and indeed transformative, for many people. More funding needs to be allocated to exploring psychological, social and other effective approaches.

The ISPS was founded in 1950 and has branches in over 20 countries, including the US.

Dr. Jessica Arenella, President of ISPS-US states:

"When we resort to forcing people into treatment, that tells me that the treatment is either not effective, not palatable, or both. In ISPS, mental health professionals sit side by side with people with lived experience of psychosis to develop approaches that are humane, respectful and, most of all, effective. In other words, treatments that people will choose to seek out"

For more information about the conference: www.isps2015nyc.org

For more information, or to arrange interviews with any of the speakers, contact: Dr. Arenella on 917-304-5901 or president@isps-us.org

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