

# February is Psychology Month

## COLLEGE OF PSYCHOLOGISTS FACES MANY CHALLENGES TODAY

By Joan LeBlanc

Psychology Month was first launched in 2005 by the Canadian Psychological Association and each year is marked during the month of February by psychology associations across Canada. Throughout the month, private practitioners, academics, scientists, and psychologists who work in health, criminal justice, schools, business, and other areas of society will be organizing local public education and psychology awareness events and activities.

"The main purpose of marking Psychology Month is to help the public understand what psychologists do, the value of our services and how they can access those services if they need them. It also offers people some quick tips on coping with different types of stress they may be experiencing," notes Dr. Jane Walsh, President of The College of Psychologists of New Brunswick.

She explains that the role of a psychologist is to help people deal with a wide range of difficulties they might be experiencing in their lives, from the everyday stressors that many people encounter to more serious mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. The public awareness campaign also strives to debunk many of the misunderstandings and myths about psychology that have come about through various mediums.

"We see psychologists on television shows and so people often think that we're going to put them on a couch and analyze their childhood. Some of those images of what psychologists do just aren't true anymore; they're an outdated, old-fashioned view," Dr. Walsh says.

Another challenge is to educate the public as to the differences between psychologists and psychiatrists, she adds, explaining that, along with social workers, both of these professionals are mental health workers. Psychiatrists must first train to become medical doctors, then they go on to specialize in psychiatry and the treatment of mental disorders.

"Psychiatrists are medical doctors who have a medical background and their focus tends to be more on treating mental health disorders with medications, however, some psychiatrists do also have training in counselling or psychotherapy," Dr. Walsh says.

Psychologists are mental health professionals who have

completed university, are trained in psychology and have earned either a Master's or PhD in psychology.

"Psychologists who have a PhD, or doctorate, in psychology are called 'doctors' but we do not have a medical background. However, we do have an extensive background in mental health treatment, research and science, and we are qualified to make diagnoses. We focus more on talk-therapy and we cannot prescribe medications," Dr. Walsh explains.

A very important role of The College of Psychologists of New Brunswick is to regulate the practice of psychology in the province.

"It ensures that the people who enter the profession, either by coming from another province or country or those who are new graduates in psychology, have the proper qualifications to practice as a psychologist in New Brunswick. It is there to ensure that those who do practice in this province are doing so in a professional, competent and ethical way. The College also hears any concerns or complaints that a person or persons might have concerning a particular psychologist," Dr. Walsh notes.

The College's second role is in the promotion of psychology and to be an advocate in the interests of psychology, for psychologists.

"We make sure we're at the table with decision-makers and that we're also there to advocate for the assurance that all people will have access to the services of a psychologist. We

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are currently communicating with the provincial government with regards to the new mental health strategy they're developing right now and are putting forth our ideas for what that should look like," she adds.

The College of Psychologists of New Brunswick is also concerned that more and more of their members are leaving the public health system in favour of setting up private practice, which results in the public having less access to psychology services.

"We're starting to see a two-tiered system where those who can afford the services of a psychologist are getting help, while those who can't afford to pay for treatments are not getting the help they need. The College is currently taking action to address this problem and has set up a task force to study it," Dr. Walsh says.

Also of concern are Employee and Family Assistance programs provided by many employers today, some of which are employing



**Dr. Jane Walsh, President of The College of Psychologists of New Brunswick**

unregulated counselors within their individual programs.

"We find this alarming because, although some counsellors are qualified to work with mental health issues, others are not and may be providing substandard service. In these instances it may be that not only are they not helping people, they may be hindering them since the person may well lose confidence in all mental health workers and not seek qualified professional assistance," she notes.

Members of The College of Psychologists of New Brunswick work hard to assist the public with mental health concerns in a professional and ethical manner.

"We are proud of what we do, we believe in what we do and that gives us the energy to address the challenges to our profession."



## FEBRUARY 2010 is PSYCHOLOGY MONTH

"Psychology is for Everyone"

### WHAT IS A PSYCHOLOGIST?

A psychologist studies how we think, feel and behave from a scientific viewpoint and applies this knowledge to help people understand, explain and change their behaviour.

### WHERE DO PSYCHOLOGISTS WORK?

Some psychologists work primarily as researchers and faculty at universities and at governmental and non-governmental organizations. Others work primarily as practitioners in hospitals, schools, clinics, correctional facilities, employee assistance programs and private offices. Many psychologists are active in both research and practice.

### WHAT DO PSYCHOLOGISTS DO?

Psychologists engage in research, practice and teaching across a wide range of topics having to do with how people think, feel and behave. Their work can involve individuals, groups, families and as well as larger organizations in government and industry. Some psychologists focus their research on animals rather than people. Here are some of the kinds of topics towards which psychologists focus their research and practice:

- mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, phobias, etc.,
- neurological, genetic, psychological and social determinants of behaviour,
- brain injury, degenerative brain diseases,
- the perception and management of pain,
- psychological factors and problems associated with physical conditions and disease (e.g. diabetes, heart disease, stroke),
- psychological factors and management of terminal illnesses such as cancer,
- cognitive functions such as learning, memory, problem solving, intellectual ability and performance,
- developmental and behavioural abilities and problems across the lifespan,
- criminal behaviour, crime prevention, services for victims and perpetrators of criminal activity,
- addictions and substance use and abuse (e.g. smoking, alcohol, drugs),
- stress, anger and other aspects of lifestyle management,
- court consultations addressing the impact and role of

psychological and cognitive factors in accidents and injury, parental capacity, and competence to manage one's personal affairs,

- the application of psychological factors and issues to work such as motivation, leadership, productivity, marketing, healthy workplaces, ergonomics,
- marital and family relationships and problems,
- psychological factors necessary to maintaining wellness and preventing disease,
- social and cultural behaviour and attitudes, the relationship between the individual and the many groups of which he or she is part (e.g. work, family, society),
- the role and impact of psychological factors on performance at work, recreation and sport.

A complete list of New Brunswick Psychologists is available at [www.cpnb.ca](http://www.cpnb.ca)

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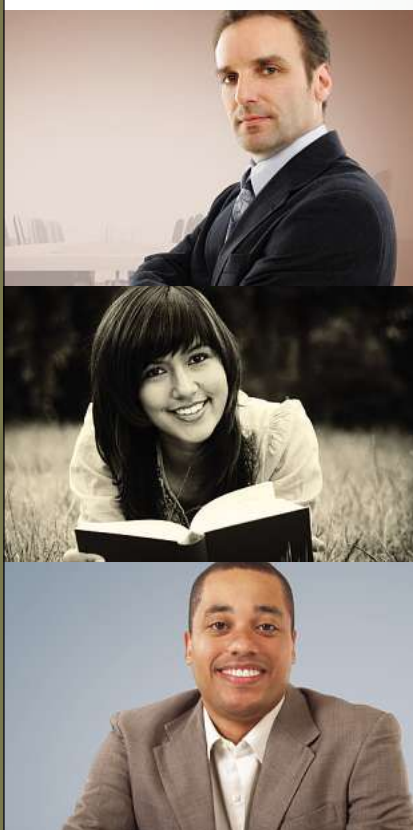
**NEW PSYCHOLOGISTS LICENSED**

The College of Psychologists of New Brunswick would like to congratulate the province's newly licensed psychologists.

Richard Aubé	Richibucto
Dr. Joanne Brideau-Hachey	Moncton
Dr. Hilary Cartwright	Fredericton
Claire Duguay Doucet	Caraquet
Dr. Rice Fuller	Fredericton
Michael Hogan	Saint John
Anne-Marie Jourdain	Caraquet
Dr. Janet Krantz	Saint John
Jean-Patrick Lanctôt	Dieppe
Dr. Cindy Letts	Fredericton
Marc Noël	Miramichi
Marie-Thérèse Thériault	Shippagan

The College of Psychologists of New Brunswick has two distinct functions: the regulation as well as the promotion of the professional practice of psychology in New Brunswick.

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