

## **To Learn More**

### *Books:*

**The Secret of the Brain Chip: A Self-Help Guide for People Suffering from Psychosis**, by Marc De Hert, Geerdts Magiels & Erik Thys, 2000

**Why Does Schizophrenia Develop at Late Adolescence? A Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Psychosis**, by Chris Harrop, 2003

**Psychosis: Understanding and Treatment**, edited by Jane Ellwood, 1995

**Substance Misuse in Psychosis: Approaches to Treatment and Service Delivery**, by Hermine Graham, 2002

### *Websites:*

<http://www.psychosissucks.ca/epi/>  
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001553.htm>

## **Help for psychosis in the Montreal Area:**

Société Québécoise de la Schizophrénie: **514-251-4125**

Montreal Children's Hospital  
Psychiatry Department: **514-412-4449**

PEPP-Montreal (Douglas Hospital):  
**514-761-6131**

Drug Help Line: **1-800-265-2626**

Kids Help Phone: **1-800-668-6868**

Head & Hands: **514-481-0277**

AMI-Quebec has many programs to help families and people suffering from mental illness. If you recognize yourself or someone you care about in this pamphlet, please contact us and we will direct you to an appropriate resource.

514-486-1448  
www.amiquebec.org  
outreach@amiquebec.org

## **PSYCHOSIS**



### **AMI-Québec** **Action on Mental Illness**

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"...Sam was seventeen when he was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic. Soon after his seventeenth birthday we noticed some changes in his behaviour and became very concerned. He wouldn't eat... everything tasted "funny", or he thought that I, his mother, was putting something in his food to make it taste "funny." He lost fifty pounds during this period of barely eating. He also started to zone out for long periods of time. He wouldn't blink very often or change his expression. Sometimes he would sit and stare at his hands for hours; when asked what was wrong with them, he would say that they were different than they used to be. Sam's condition became worse. He was hearing voices, and thought that the walls had bugs on them..."

### **What is Psychosis?**

Psychosis is a medical condition that is characterized by a person's loss of contact with reality. It affects their thoughts, perceptions and/or behaviours. Psychotic disorders are often recurrent and chronic. Psychosis affects both men and women equally and most often develops during adolescence and young adulthood. Psychosis is commonly associated with

schizophrenia, and sometimes with depression and bipolar disorder. Additionally, those with a family history of psychotic disorders may be at a heightened risk for developing psychosis.

Psychosis can also be a result of illicit drug use. People with dual diagnoses (suffering from both mental illness and substance abuse) suffer more episodes of psychosis. Because of the difficulty in developing social relationships, some people find themselves more easily accepted by the drug-using community, thereby exacerbating their problems with drugs.

### **Symptoms of Psychosis**

Psychosis consists of both "positive" and "negative" symptoms.

### **Examples of Positive Symptoms**

- Hearing voices that nobody else can hear
- Seeing things that aren't there,
- Believing that others can influence your thoughts, or that you can influence the thoughts of others
- Believing that you are being watched
- or followed
- Feeling that your thoughts have either sped up or slowed down

### **Examples of Negative Symptoms**

- Apathy
- Emotional unresponsiveness
- Slow speech and actions
- Difficulty in thinking abstractly
- Stereotyped thinking
- Poor communication skills
- Decrease in physical activity

### **Treatments**

- Antipsychotic medication
- Education
- Support

Antipsychotic medication helps to treat both the positive and negative symptoms of psychotic disorders.