

**Mental health information Centre of South Africa**  
**Annual Mental Health Media awards ceremony 2009**

The Mental Health Information Centre of South Africa (MHIC) hosted the Mental Health Media Awards ceremony on Thursday the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2009.

With these awards the MHIC wanted to acknowledge the crucial role of the media in raising public awareness about mental health and illness. Relevant, accurate and in-depth reporting is an invaluable means to dispel myths regarding mental illness, reduce the stigma associated with mental illness and help people to recognize when they may require professional help. Journalists who make it their priority to disseminate facts about mental health related issues should be encouraged, reminded of this responsibility towards the South African public and awarded for their important work.

The Minister of Health in the Western Cape, Mr Theuns Botha, was the guest speaker. His speech focused on this year's theme of the international mental health awareness campaign: *Mental health in primary care: Enhancing treatment and promoting mental health*. He also emphasized the importance of consideration of mental health issues by government. Very exciting news: Mr Botha let the cat out of the bag about building plans for a new psychiatric hospital in the Western Cape...!

The awards were handed over by Prof Soraya Seedat, Co-Director of the MRC Unit on Anxiety and Stress Disorders. Awards were presented to journalists in the following categories:

- Newspaper / magazines category
- Radio/ TV category
- Internet category

- Glynis Horning received the award under the newspaper/magazine category for accurate, accessible reporting on a number of mental health related topics, e.g. borderline personality disorder, food guilt, and when to ask for help.
- Ilse Pauw received the award under the internet category for accurate and well-balanced reporting; a scientific approach to writing about psychiatric conditions such as depression and the stigma associated with mental illness. Ms Pauw has also been the winner of the MHIC media award a number of times previously.
- Metzi van der Merwe received the award under the TV/radio category for accurate, accessible and well-balanced reporting on a number of psychiatric disorders, e.g. bipolar disorder, panic attacks, attention-deficit disorder, dementia, social anxiety disorder, schizophrenia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, traditional healers, mental illness and medical aid.

The overall winner award for exceptional reporting on mental health matters in 2009 was awarded to Metzi van der Merwe. Everyone on the judging panel were in agreement that she is a deserving winner indeed!

Prof Robin Emsley, Head of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Stellenbosch did the closing of this exciting event, again emphasizing the responsibility of journalists to dispel the existing myths about psychiatric disorders.

The contributions and presence of our sponsors - Wyeth, the Department of Psychiatry and Health Science Library at Stellenbosch University, and Sanofi Aventis – are gratefully acknowledged.

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