

Cross Cultural Newsletter

“Mental Health Issues Encountered by the Police: An Interactive and Informal Evening with Senior Sergeant Ross Endicott-Davies”

24th May, 2016

This is to report on the meeting we held on 24th May 2016. Once again, we were oversubscribed. More than 60 of our members attended.

On that evening, we had the police coming to talk to us. The topic was “**Mental Health Issues Encountered by the Police: an Interactive and Informal Evening with Senior Sergeant Ross Endicott-Davies**”. He had most of his team members to attend and discuss with the audience about the issues they raised.

Senior Sergeant Ross Endicott-Davies was most humorous and provided a very stimulating talk about the police and their duties. I can only provide a paraphrase of his talk. As such, there might be misinterpretations. *Those who are interested in obtaining an accurate rendition of the talk, please send for the disc. Also, it is already posted on our secure web site. Members please request a link in order to view the session.*

The Senior Sergeant covered three key areas before opening to the floor for discussions. First, he portrayed **the goals and values of the police**. Having covered this area, the Senior Sergeant described **challenges that face the police**, describing some often held biased views by public of behaviours of new arrivals to New Zealand and also towards the Police. He then **clarified and demystified public misconceptions about police work** and more importantly, shed light on the immense task a modern police force has to face in a fast changing and globalising world with multi-ethnicities. Lastly, he described how the Public can help the police in the execution of their duties.

The key **task** of the police aims at maintaining community well-being. In this, like any member of the Public, the police shared this duty with others.



As to **challenges** the police face, **biased attitude** from different sectors of the **community towards each other** would be a challenge to the police who have to provide assistance to all. Similarly, clarifying a number of **misconceptions of the public towards the police** is important to facilitate cooperation.

Lastly, trying to execute the duty in a fast changing and globalising world would require **special training that needs to keep up with the rate of change**. In the first regard, the Senior Sergeant described biased precepts about behaviours of new members of society, what he termed xenophobic behaviours including the attitude that the new comers (including Asians) are wealthy, problematic drivers, and frequently involve in family violence and organised crime. Any such incidence is often excessively highlighted.

These misconceptions often would require re-education to correct.

On the other hand, there are also misconceptions about police work— being viewed by a number of different people, including new comers, as mainly involving in crime interventions.

As a matter of fact, **police work involves a whole spectrum of social interventions** such as aiding victims of crime, dealing with neighbourhood concerns and security, and assistance to some members of the Public with health issues such as mental health.

The last of the challenge lies in preparing and up skilling the police to deal with the new changes, including training in cross cultural sensitivity, and more pertinent to our situation, Mental Health awareness. In the last respect, **the police have a Mental Health training Team and developed an App to facilitate individual learning.** Confronted with such wide-ranging expectations, there might be criticisms about police work, thinking that they are supermen. The Senior Sergeant reminded the audience that the police are just human like any of us.

Lastly, in terms of police expectations of how the public can help to facilitate their work, the Senior Sergeant emphasised both the sharing of information and communication rank foremost. With mental health patients this would involve helping them to provide the best and least restrictive care. In a similar vein, communication and sharing would require a willingness of the community agencies to work together with the police. In this, keeping an open mind, having no preconceived opinions about each other, and stepping out of each other's comfort zone to co-operate are some of the important ingredients to facilitate cooperation and working together. Last, but by no means least, although the responsibility for keeping the community safe rest on the shoulders of the police, individual community member's obligation to contribute to safety is equally important. Examples abound where individuals ignore their safety behaviours. In this, the Senior Sergeant emphasised on correcting misconception about safety in New Zealand such as advice not to go to isolated areas, stay with a group, be environment aware, watch out for vulnerable people, and to know one's neighbourhood.



Having thus portrayed the police, their tasks , challenges and misconceptions, The Senior Sergeant open the floor for the audience to bring up their issues. Most of the issues surround the interface between police and the Mental Health Staff. Please refer to the website or the DVD for details. The topic was so interesting that 45 minutes had to be dedicated on such discussions. However, the Senior Sergeant stressed that the most important issue is: **when not certain, always communicate.** In this role, the Senior Sergeant offered himself as the centre point for liaison and communications.

As 45 minutes were insufficient to discuss all the issues our members wish to raise, we have decided that later in the year, as with other topics presented earlier this year, we would arrange for a case study and panel discussion session. Please watch for the flyer.

By the time you receive this, the recording is already on the website. Those interested in the topic, please send a request for the web link or a DVD from Diane.

NEXT SESSION In June, we will have a break and will resume our sessions again in **July 26th**. The topic would likely be a **case study on abuse of therapeutic medication among Asians.** Please watch for the Flyer.

Once again, thank you for your support.

I look forward to seeing you all in our next session.

Yours sincerely,

S Wong

On behalf of the Cross Cultural interest group.

For a more accurate rendition of the presentation, **please request the DVD** from Diane Evans at dianee@adhb.govt.nz (please send \$2 stamps to help cover costs). Post stamps to ADHB CMHS, Cross Culture, Bldg 7, Level 4, GCC, Greenlane, 1051.

For ADHB staff, previous newsletters and flyers can be viewed on the Intranet – click on this link:

http://adhbintranet/Mental_Health/Resources/CrossCulture.htm