

No one chooses mental illness

By Dr. Marlene Hunter, Times Colonist June 11, 2010

Thank you for the editorial "A terrible failure on mental illness" (June 9).

Mental illness is just that -- an illness. It is not requested, not useful and not in any way helpful for those who suffer from this incredibly debilitating intrusion into their lives.

Our province does not do too well with mental illness, addictions and lack of housing (because of lack of financial support). There is a persistent belief that those who suffer from any, many or all of the above are either acting, playing games or lying.

It is all too true that the closing of a major mental-illness facility near New Westminster many decades ago contributed in a huge way to the congestion on our streets of people who were and are suffering from these disorders.

This is not to say that it was the epitome of good management regarding helping people through their dismal mental and emotional problems; it wasn't. But its closing did not help those who suffered from these intrusions to find a way to live with at least some small degree of a sense of self-worth. VIHA needs to take a second look at where, and how, this situation could change in a positive way.

The next editorial offered some hope for Steve Fonyo. He has not been treated very well in our supposedly open-minded perception of human frailties. How wonderful that he is, belatedly, again being appreciated for his incredible journey across Canada. Kudos to you, Steve, and also to your friend, John Vickers.

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