

### **Unique Conference Specifically for Family Members of OCD Sufferers**

Experts from the Institute of Psychiatry will tell attendees of a unique conference on the 25<sup>th</sup> July in Reading that health professionals often fail to correctly identify when someone suffers from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). As a consequence, the burden of this very disabling and distressing condition tends to fall on family members.

Key OCD experts will explore the extent of this problem and ways it can be better dealt with at a unique conference, the first event of its kind, an OCD conference specifically aimed at the family, friends and carers of people with OCD.

The conference will also hear from Dr Fiona Challacombe who will report that Obsessional problems during pregnancy and postnatal often go undetected. Even when detected, they are misdiagnosed and not treated appropriately. The burden of suffering from OCD in addition to the normal stresses of parenthood will be discussed in the context of the development of new ways of identifying and treating OCD in this context.

Dr Challacombe will also inform the conference that OCD not only interferes with parenting, but also with the decision to have children in the first place. Although the impact is huge, the problem is to all intents and purposes “invisible” in that the decision not to have children leaves an unnecessary gap which tends to be filled by regrets and sadness later in the sufferer’s life. This may only become apparent when people receive appropriate treatment, and belatedly realise that their OCD was not a lifelong incurable disease.

A spokesperson for OCD-UK commented “OCD is really not recognised as the serious debilitating illness that it is, and when that prevents a family, often a very loving and caring family from having children, then OCD really has destroyed a life”. OCD-UK Chief-Executive, Ashley Fulwood went on to say “OCD impacts on the sufferer without question, but also those closest to the sufferer, and this conference is all about recognising that and learning together what we can do to help each other”.

For further information about speakers and workshops, or to book your place at this unique conference, visit the OCD-UK website at <http://www.ocduk.org> or call to request a flyer on 0845 120 3778.

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## **Case Study**

Being a parent of a child of OCD at any age can be very confusing and a bit scary at times due to a lack of understanding of actual obsessive behaviour.

It's a constant worry, I had the feeling I needed to reassure and comfort, blaming myself, is it my fault? I searched for things I did/didn't do. Did I clean the house too much when she was little, what was I like while we were out of the house? I was searching to find something that could have affected her present behaviour.

On reflection there was a phase of denial, there is nothing wrong with our child she'll grow out of it. But we watched as things become worse at different stages of her life -it seemed worse for her dad who couldn't comprehend what was going on at all, let alone why!

I discovered that reassurance and comfort, for example, 'its okay yes you have locked up properly or don't worry I'll do it for you' were only making matters worse. It's a case of having to be cruel to be kind, this is very difficult applied to anyone let alone your own child whatever the age.

My advice to any parents, siblings and anyone else involved is to accept the situation as it is at the time, not to be judgemental there is no stigma: Accept – Support – Inspire.

By Katherine Stakounis (mother of OCD-UK chair, Maria Bavetta).

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## **Notes to Editors:**

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OCD-UK is the leading national charity, independently working with and for people with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

It is our belief that everyone affected by Obsessive Compulsive Disorder should receive the most appropriate and the highest quality standards of care, support and treatment.

Our objective is to make a positive and meaningful difference in the everyday lives of people affected by Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, by providing accessible and effective support services and by campaigning for improved access and quality treatment and care for people with OCD. We believe it is vital that every person affected by OCD receives the highest quality of treatment and care that they are entitled to and deserve.

Visit our media facts: <http://www.ocduk.org/16/mediafacts.htm> for more detailed information about OCD.

Registered Charity Number: 1103210