

# HUMAN RIGHTS ALERT

JULY 15, 1999

ISSUE # 2



**A Psychiatric Survival Broadsheet**

## **VICTORY!! City finally issues factsheets on psych. drugs & hot weather**

The *real* health concerns of psychiatrically labeled persons finally began to receive some recognition as the Toronto Board of Health responded to public pressure by issuing two factsheets on how best to protect one's self from the heat, and more importantly, on the specific prescription drugs that pose the greatest potential risk.

These documents (which were distributed July 5 accompanied by a press release from the City) were drafted by Toronto's Medical Officer of Health in conjunction with the Regent Park Community Health Centre.

### **Drugs listed**

The first of these documents, entitled '**Summer Safety: Heat, Drugs and Alcohol**'\* identifies those individuals most at risk, spells out the common symptoms of heat-related illnesses and offers a number of suggestions on how people can reduce the risk.

The second, entitled '**Medications & Heat-related Illnesses**'\*\* lists more than forty common prescription drugs associated with increased risk of heat stroke or that increase photosensitivity of the skin - it came as little surprise that most of the drugs on this list

(which is far from complete) are those commonly prescribed to psychiatric 'patients'.

### **'Cooling centres'**

In addition, the City is discussing the implementation of a high-temperature threshold (similar to that established for cold weather alerts during the winter) after which some form of improved access to temperature-controlled spaces would be provided for homeless persons and others at risk. (Such 'cooling centres' already exist in some U.S. cities).

The release of these documents represents an important step forward in seeing that the *bona fide* health issues of psychiatric survivors (rather than merely those suggested through the medicalizing of our behavior or beliefs) are finally recognized as important and valid. Pressure on the City and media must be maintained in order to ensure this information is put in the hands of every psych. 'patient' and homeless person in Toronto.

\* [www.city.toronto.on.ca/health/beatheat.htm](http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/health/beatheat.htm)

## **Germany Survivor groups seek return of 'Prinzhorn Collection'**\*\*

Hans Prinzhorn, a Nazi psychiatrist, worked in the psychiatric facility of

Heidelberg University from 1919 to 1921. He collected works of art made by institutionalized persons from all the German-speaking countries.

In the 30's, the collection was used by the Nazis, in full academic and moral collaboration with the Heidelberg psychiatrists, to depict modern art as 'Entartete Kunst' (degenerate art).

In 1939, Prof. Carl Schneider, head of the Heidelberg University Psychiatric Department, gave legitimacy to the Nazi genocide by actively participating in it. Some of these institutionalized artists were among the psychiatric patients who became the objects and victims of science in a program of killing-on-demand: the **Aktion T4**.

Today the University intends to dis-

### **Art held illegally**

play these works of art made by psychiatric patients in the very place where they experienced their most profound humiliation, i.e. the same lecture hall in which Prof. Carl Schneider held his lectures, and to do this against the explicit objections of the Psychiatric Users and Survivors.

The Prinzhorn Collection is held illegally by Heidelberg University, which took possession of it in an immoral way (as proved in an expertise by Prof. Raue). The university has blocked all compromises

**<Prinzhorn - next page>**

**SURVIVORS' RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS!**

**<Prinzhorn - continued>**

offered by the Bishop of Berlin, Professor Huber, and it refuses an appropriate presentation of the collection in a museum in Berlin, where the social context in which the artists lived would be explained and which would have substantially more floor space.

The National Association of Psychiatric Survivors in Germany together with a group of prominent supporters (among them Henry Friedlander, Bishop Huber, Ellis Huber (President of the Berlin Chamber of Medical Doctors) and Ram Ishay (for 19 years the President of the Israeli Chamber of Medical Doctors) ) plans to build a museum called **'Haus des Eigensinns'** at 4 Tiergarten Street in Berlin.

At this address the staff, organization and technology for the Nazi genocide was first developed in 1938, when the German psychiatrists and the Nazi administration decided to carry out **Aktion T4**. That was the name given to the ideological mass murder of psychiatric inmates in gas showers (later by starvation and deadly injections) operated by the psychiatric staff.

**\*\*The above is a partial reprint of an Action Alert issued by the National Association of Psychiatric Survivors in Germany and the Israeli Association Against Psychiatric Assault.**

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**FAX LETTERS OF PROTEST TO:**

**HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY  
FAX: +011 49 622 154 2618**

**MINISTER FOR SCIENCE & CULTURE  
FAX: +011 49 711 279 3080**



**(UNTITLED)  
Karl Gustav Sievers  
(incarcerated in Gottingen)**

**Keep those letters coming!**

The Government of Ontario has made it clear that they intend to proceed with plans to implement 'outpatient committal' legislation along with other measures that would greatly compromise the rights of psychiatrically labeled persons.

Mike Harris and his cabinet seem to be fixated on the notion that the escalation in homelessness and poverty is caused by an 'epidemic of mental illness' rather than anything his government is doing. Unfortunately, it is **us** who will wind up paying the price for this particular delusion, through the resulting abrogation of even our most basic freedoms.

Letters must continue to be sent to Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer as a means of serving notice that Ontario's survivors will not allow this without mounting major resistance!

**Send letters to:**

**The Hon. Elizabeth Witmer  
Hepburn Block  
80 Grosvenor St. 10th Flr  
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4  
P: (416) 327-4300 F: (416) 326-1571  
<elizabeth\_witmer@ontla.ola.org>**

**Psychiatric survivor resources in Toronto**

**People Against Coercive Treatment**

**P: 760-2795 F: 368-5984**

**Internet: <pact@tao.ca>**

**<www.tao.ca/~pact>**

**\*\*\***

**Queen Street Patient's Council**

**Room 2059, 1001 Queen St. W.**

**Toronto, Ontario M6J 1H4**

**P: 535-8501x2018 F: 325-9749**

**Internet: <patientsco@icomm.ca>**

**<www.icomm.ca/~patientsco>**

**\*\*\***

**No Force! Coalition**

**(c/o Queen Street Patient's Council)**

**<www.tao.ca/~pact/noforce.html>**

**From the editor...**

Apologies for the inadequate contact information provided in the last issue - it appears that personal privacy must to a degree take a back seat if this publication is to be inclusive.

Contributions from my fellow survivors would be most welcome for inclusion in future issues of this alert.

Please forward your stories, reports, personal accounts, anecdotes, opinions or rants to

**HUMAN RIGHTS ALERT**

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**Toronto, ON M5A 2A2**

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I will make every effort to ensure that your original documents are returned.

Contributions may be edited for space. Please try to keep contributions to a maximum of 350 words.

**Keep up the struggle!**

**-- GRAEME BACQUE**

