

Greetings!

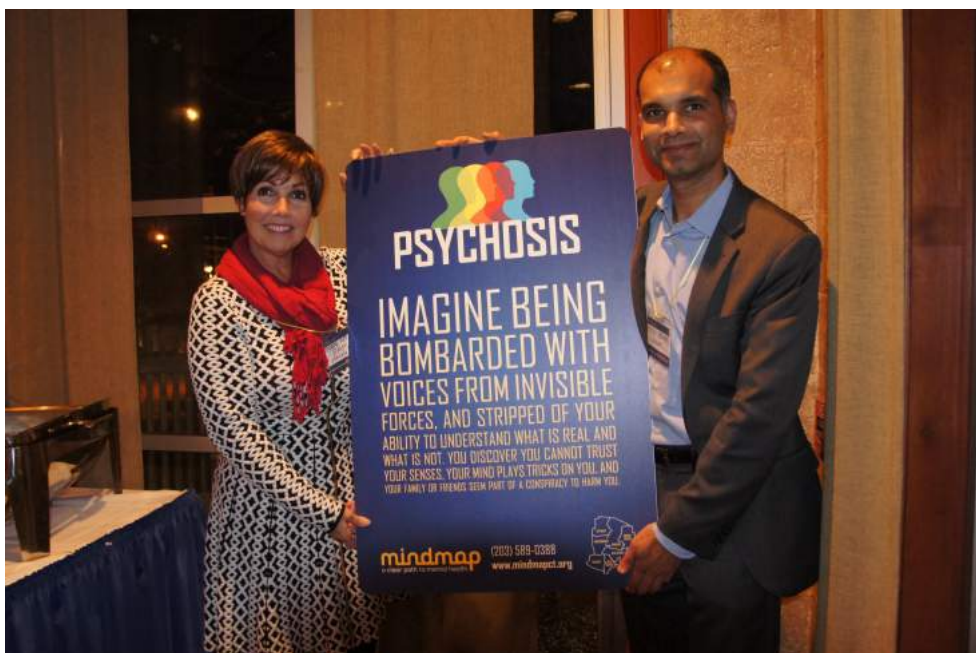
Following is a press release on the first early intervention psychosis clinic in the United States: the Program for Specialized Treatment Early in Psychosis (STEP) in New Haven, Connecticut. STEP offers free, comprehensive care to young individuals in Greater New Haven facing the recent onset of a psychotic disorder.

MindMap, STEP's public education campaign, has recently come on board as one of 65 New Haven-based businesses and organizations on the city's "Made in New Haven" branding project.

Attached are two images for use with attribution to Glen McDermott:



New Haven Mayor Toni Harp, STEP and MindMap Director Vinod Srihari and his son Karun, and STEP Outreach & Intake Coordinator Phillip Markovich at the New Haven Marathon.



State Representative Pam Staneski (R-119) and STEP and MindMap Director Vinod Srihari at a local workshop.

Press on STEP and MindMap is welcome. For more information, contact Vinod Srihari at vinod.srihari@yale.edu, Glen McDermott at glen@redrockbranding.com, or visit mindmapct.org.

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November 21, 2016

For immediate release:

The First U.S. Early Intervention Psychosis Clinic Changes Lives in Greater New Haven

The Program for Specialized Treatment Early in Psychosis (STEP) is the first comprehensive early intervention service of its kind in the U.S, and it's located right here in New Haven, Connecticut.

STEP first began offering comprehensive care to individuals facing the recent onset of a psychotic disorder in 2006. Since then, STEP has been recognized as a national model of “coordinated specialty care,” and it continues to provide free services to people aged 16 to 35 in the Greater New Haven area who have been experiencing psychotic symptoms for less than three years.

In 2015, STEP launched MindMap, a public education campaign that seeks to improve access to care after psychosis onset. This year, STEP and MindMap have proudly joined 65 other New Haven-based businesses and organizations on the “Made In New Haven” branding campaign to celebrate the city as a place of invention, ingenuity, and open-mindedness.

STEP aims to reduce unnecessary suffering and disability due to psychotic illnesses by reducing treatment delays and providing an evidence-based model of care to patients and their families. With STEP clinicians, patients create a customized treatment plan which can involve psychotherapy, medication, employment opportunities, health and fitness support, and substance abuse counseling. Most young patients have a rapid and significant response to treatment and are soon ready to return to their everyday lives.

STEP launched the MindMap campaign in 2015 with Red Rock Branding, a New Haven-based marketing agency. MindMap aims to educate the community about the signs of psychosis and build a network of individuals and agencies who can transform pathways to care. Together, STEP and MindMap seek to empower affected youth and their loved ones to seek care as soon as possible, sending out a simple message via community engagement, outreach, and social media channels: Treatment works, and the sooner it's started, the better the recovery.

“One of the challenges of working with mental health is that the symptoms are invisible, it is surrounded by stigma, and few people are comfortable talking about it,” said Red Rock founder Glen

McDermott. “Creating the MindMap brand has been a very rewarding collaborative effort between our team, our STEP clinical partners, and local community members. It's been a great fit for us at Red Rock, where we build healthy communities and unite business for social good.”

"We know that early intervention works and keeps young people in work or school and out of the hospital," says Jessica Pollard, PhD, STEP's Clinical Director. "However, even the best treatment programs can only work for people who find or get referred to them. Community awareness of psychosis, knowing what to do when a young person exhibits warning signs, and early intervention are crucial in quickly getting people to effective treatment programs like STEP.

"Having worked with hundreds of adolescents and young adults in the early stages of psychosis over the years, I know what a meaningful difference early intervention makes: those who are struggling spend less time frightened and distressed by symptoms, and families spend less time worrying, not knowing what to do."

Vinod Srihari, MD, Director of STEP and MindMap, is also seeing improvement in pathways to care. More patients are coming to STEP voluntarily or from family and friend referrals, and less are coming from hospitals and emergency rooms. Another encouraging trend shows that those seeking treatment are arriving sooner after the onset of symptoms.

"For many individuals, when treated well and early, psychotic illnesses do not need to be the most significant variable in their lives," Srihari says. "Like for the rest of us, their accomplishments can be driven more by their interests, ambitions, talents, and so on."

Srihari remembers one patient in particular whose success story shows just how effective early psychosis intervention is. This patient began experiencing symptoms of psychosis while in community college, and her paranoia and destructive behavior became so severe that she took a leave of absence from school.

The patient's mother reached out to STEP, and after numerous phone calls with staff ensuring her that treatment was voluntary, pain-free, and nothing like what was portrayed in Hollywood movies, she agreed to start STEP. With the right medication and regular talk therapy, her paranoia reduced within a month's time. She is now enrolled in a four-year university, continues with regular treatment, and is deciding what major to pursue as she enters her sophomore year.

STEP's free, coordinated specialty care is currently available to people living in a 10-town region surrounding the clinic: New Haven, West Haven, East Haven, North Haven, Hamden, Woodbridge, Bethany, Branford, Orange, and Milford. Eligible patients are between the ages of 16 and 35 and have been experiencing psychotic symptoms for less than three years. Services are offered at the Connecticut Mental Health Center, located at 34 Park Street in downtown New Haven.

If you or someone you know might be experiencing symptoms of psychosis, call MindMap at (203) 589-0388. You can also text "MINDMAP" to (203) 589-0388. If a staff member is unable to take your call, leave a message and receive a callback within one business day.

For more information and resources on STEP, mental health, and psychosis, visit mindmapct.org or email general questions to help@mindmapct.org.