



Press Release

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For Immediate Release

Former Mental Health Service User Wins Patient Contributor of the Year Award

A former mental health patient has been named winner of the Patient Contributor of the Year category at this year's RCPsych Awards.

The RCPsych Awards are the annual awards ceremony of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the professional medical body responsible for setting and raising standards of psychiatry in the United Kingdom.

Raf Hamaizia joined Cygnet in 2016 as the first Expert by Experience. In 2018 he was appointed the first full time Expert by Experience Lead. Since that time he has been involved in setting up and leading Cygnet's Expert by Experience programme, championing People's Councils at local, regional and national level and embedding the concept of co-production across the organisation.

More recently Raf has also set up the Music 2 Empower initiative that aims to bring the positive effects of music therapy to Cygnet services. Another initiative that Raf has been heavily involved in is Co-Sustain, which raises awareness and educates individuals on meaningful changes they can make to have a positive impact on the environment.

Raf was nominated in the Patient Contributor of the Year category by Jon Van Niekerk, Cygnet's Group Clinical Director, who said: "Raf is one of those rare individuals that approaches everything he does with passion, humility, tenacity and a wicked sense of humour. I believe he thoroughly deserves this award, not only for all he does for Cygnet, but also the mental health sector as a whole."

Raf was presented his award by Dr Adrian James, President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and Simon Rose, Patient Representative for the RCPsych.

Speaking at the awards, Simon said: "It has been a pleasure to be involved in the judging process. Each and every contributor has made such a positive contribution to the lives of the individuals they have come across and their communities."

Dr Adrian James added: "This award recognises the important contribution patients make to developing and improving mental health services. The judges were looking for people who have made a positive impact on mental health services by improving the perception of mental health issues, encouraging policy changes and facilitating the training of mental health professionals.

"The judges said it was inspiring to see the commitment that all nominees show and the breadth of activity people are involved in is absolutely fantastic.

“It was tough to score but the judges were impressed by Raf’s involvement in various national projects which have had a positive impact on services and patients. They thanked Raf for all he does.”

Reacting to winning the award Raf said: “I am honoured and privileged to have received this reputable award. I would like to thank our Group Medical Director Dr Jon Van Niekerk for the nomination which I feel is telling on how psychiatry has embraced co-production and lived experience.

“This award means a lot to me having been a former service user myself. Upon my discharge, it quickly became apparent I could have conducive relationships with clinicians based on co-production and a shared vision for safe, effective and quality care. It is beautiful to be part of this growing agenda.

“The work that has been recognised would not have been possible without the wider team at Cygnet Health Care including the teams that provide the important support in the background to ensure the co-produced initiatives we are leading on have the support, resources and awareness to flourish.”

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Notes to Editors:

For more information, please contact Gemma Attew, External Communications Manager, on gemmaattew@cygnethealth.co.uk or 07718 244811.

About Cygnet Health Care

Cygnet Health Care has been providing a national network of high-quality, specialised mental health services for the NHS and local authorities for the past 30 years.

Cygnet Health Care’s pioneering services support people with complex and acute mental health needs across the UK.

As one of the best quality providers in mental health services in the country, Cygnet Health Care’s focus is always on the best outcomes for those who use or commission its services. 85% of Cygnet’s facilities are rated as good or outstanding, which is above the national average.

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