

A Message from the President of the Foundation, Nesrin Shaheen

Fellow Anti NMDA Family and Fighters,

Last Friday, 16 September 2016 I had the privilege and pleasure to attend the premiere screening of *Brain on Fire* at the Toronto International Film Festival, at the Princess of Wales Theatre, to represent the Foundation. For some this might be just a movie, but for me and I know for all of you following, this is an important film and a historic milestone on the road to better treatments, less misdiagnosis and hopefully one day a cure.

I took the opportunity to raise the profile of the Foundation by handing out the Foundation's bilingual pamphlet to the people lining up for the movie, to give them additional information about the disease. I could not have done it without the invaluable help of the amazing Suzanne Kong, her parents and a crew of Suzanne's friends who helped get the information into the hands of people to help them learn more about the disease. We also handed out buttons to anyone who wanted one, which had our tagline, *I am Anti NMDA Receptor Encephalitis*.

After the movie, there was a Q & A with Susannah Cahalan and her husband Stephen Grywalski, Dr. Najjar, Susannah's neurologist, Chloë Grace Moretz, the star of *Brain on Fire* and Gerrad Barrett the director of the film. About halfway through, survivors or their representatives were invited on stage, to show the diverse face of anti-NMDA. This was completely unexpected and a



really nice touch. It was especially gratifying when I noticed Gerrard Barrett curiously examining the button pin on the lapel of one of the survivors. He then motioned to the young man to hand it over to him and at the end, told the audience to use the hashtag #IAMANTINMDA in their social media communications. Needless to say, I was absolutely delighted!



Backstage we had the chance to take pictures with Chloë Grace Moretz, Susannah Cahalan and Charlize Theron, the producer of the movie.

A dinner for survivors and their families and friends followed in a nearby restaurant; expertly arranged and coordinated by Cheryl Hunter Liuzza and Susanne Kong. It was a reunion for many of us but also a chance to meet some whom we had only known through social media. The meeting was also a testimony to the good outcomes that can be attained by most survivors. All of us still live with the fear of a relapse in our loved one, but we at least have a diagnosis which could lead to a quick intervention. More importantly we have our anti-NMDA family who has and will continue to be there for each and everyone of us.



A strong momentum was started with the publication of the book, *Brain on Fire: My Month of Madness* in 2012 and now the movie will reach an even larger audience. With your help, we can keep that momentum going. Thank you all for being #ANTINMDA!

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Nesrin