Addiction & Mental Health
Strategic Clinical Network
Update

The goal of the Addiction & Mental Health Strategic Clinical Network (AMH SCN) is to engage stakeholders in the dissemination and implementation of best evidence practices to prevent, treat and improve outcomes in addiction and mental health.

To date the Addiction & Mental Health SCN has:

- Formed a Core Committee of physicians, front-line clinicians, researchers, and others that specialize in addiction and mental health.
- Developed research networks to ensure a strong linkage between research and practice.
- Started our work to develop a Transformational Roadmap - this sets our initial priorities for our SCN over the next 3-5 years.
- Launched the Adult Depression Clinical Trial project.
- Formed partnerships with the following Strategic Clinical Networks:
  - Seniors Health SCN on the Appropriate Use of Antipsychotics project
  - Cardiovascular SCN on the Vascular Risk Reduction project

Special points of interest:

- Our goal of making Alberta the best at preventing & treating depression in Canada by 2017 is underway starting with:
  - Adult depression clinical trial
  - Adolescent intervention
- With a wide representation of stakeholders, Addiction & Mental Health SCN will map out work for an Alcohol Care Pathway.
- Assessments and analysis in a variety of areas including rTMS, toxicology tests, and NRT are underway. Stay tuned for the next newsletter with more details.

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Adult Depression Pathway Clinical Trial

The primary focus of this project is treating adult depression within the family doctor’s office, as studies show that:

- Depression is the 4th leading cause of disability and premature death in the world (Health Canada. A Report on Mental Illness in Canada. Ottawa, Canada, 2002)
- According to a 2006/7 analysis of all diagnostic groups in Alberta, depression treatment exhibited a high variation of the cost of treatment between cases, high overall cost of treatment and a significant number of community members per year.
- Slomp, et al., (2009) reported that approximately 1/3 of Albertans who consulted a family physician over a three year period were given a mental health diagnosis with:
  - 16% of those adults receiving a diagnosis of depression
  - 84% of those receiving a diagnosis of depression only received treatment from their family physician.

The goals of the project is to ensure evidence-based cost-effective interventions are being used to treat depression in the most efficient manner possible. This will allow:

- Quicker and more accurate identification of depression
- Enhanced outcomes for patients who are treated for depression
- Improved value-for-money using standardized, validated treatment
- Ensure the least intensive treatment intervention is used while still achieving the most appropriate clinical outcome
- Increased community member satisfaction by improving communication with clinicians and providing treatment

This project is fundamental to achieving our goal of making Alberta the best at preventing and treating depression in Canada within the next 5 years.
Transformational Road Map

Think of a transformational road map by envisioning a trip to Italy with a group of your friends. Everyone wants to get to Italy, but how to get there, how many stops to make, where to leave from, what to do in Italy, how long to stay, are all details that need to be planned. A transformational road map is like setting a map for where the Addiction & Mental Health SCN is going, and of course, all the details that go with it. What projects we will focus on in the next 3-5 years is a main feature of the Road Map.

The Core committee met on March 19th to begin development of this Road Map in March. This session involved brainstorming the priorities from the various sectors represented on the committee. Armed with this information, a smaller group will focus on which priorities were of top concern and bring that back to a later meeting.

The SCN wants all partners and stakeholders to have a voice in the Road Map development. If you are reading this newsletter, you can contribute! See the last page for information on how to contact the SCN to take part in the Road Map.

Research Updates

Research Networks

One of the SCN’s foundations is to ensure that practice occurring in Alberta is evidence based and supported by research. To ensure this, the Addiction & Mental Health SCN has created three Research Networks that will inform the SCN’s in particular topic areas. The three Networks are focused on Youth, Depression, and Addiction and have research representation from across the province and across areas of expertise. All three networks have met and are in the beginning stages of development. We will provide ongoing updates on the work of these Networks, so check back for more details to come.

Funding Opportunity

Researchers in the field of adolescent mental health were invited to attend the Transformational Research in Adolescent Mental Health (TRAM) event on April 9th, 2013. The purpose of TRAM is to:

- Pool financial and intellectual resources to build and support one pan-Canadian research-to-practice network
- Seek out unconventional and highly-innovative approaches to Adolescent Mental Health
- Commit to make a difference in health delivery in the next 5 years by doing things differently

This event supported transformative research in Alberta by beginning new collaborations within the province that will demonstrably improve health outcomes and enhance health care for community members by bringing about collaborations of researchers, provinces, health care providers, patients and families working in partnership to improve the quality and effectiveness of care among youth.

The Empowering a Multi-sectoral Pathway Towards Healthy Youth (EMPATHY) project was submitted to TRAM in May for consideration and has been shortlisted. As a result Marni Bercov and Dr. Peter Silverstone have been invited to attend the TRAM event in Montreal in June.
Addiction & Mental Health Depression Project

The Addiction and Mental Health Strategic Clinical Network (SCN) proposes a goal of making Alberta the best at preventing and treating depression in Canada by 2017. To accomplish this, a depression program which crosses tiers one to five of the care continuum and includes the full age spectrum is progressing. The overall program of work begins with the following initiatives: perinatal depression, school based programs, health technology assessment for treatment resistant depression, and clinical pathways for the adolescent, adult, and senior populations. The AMH SCN is completing some preliminary work on several of the initiatives; however this article will concentrate on the further refinement of both the adult and adolescent depression pathway work. Background work for other components of the larger depression program are underway and will come forward as separate initiatives.

Work has been completed by the Provincial Addiction & Mental Health Program and the previous Clinical Network. Phase one of the program included the development and pilot of the adult and adolescent clinical pathways, piloted in primary care clinics and AHS mental health clinics, respectively. The pilots confirmed the suitability of using pathways for depression; however, further questions regarding the impact of screening alone, effectiveness of various elements of the pathway and scalability of the pathways were identified. In order to examine those outstanding questions, a clinical trial will be run over the next 6-8 months.

A four arm clinical trial has been approved in order to assess the effectiveness of different interventions within a clinical pathway for the care of depression. Key measures will include changes in PHQ-9 and/or PHQ-A scores and self reported quality of life measure using the EQ-5D tool. The interventions include a control group for comparison, a group that receives screening alone, a group that is offered a self-guided online based intervention, and a group that is put on the full clinical pathway. The clinical trial will inform decision making regarding the interventions that are most appropriate for the treatment of depression.

Based on the findings from the clinical trials, the clinical pathways for adults will be adapted and spread to other Primary Care Networks across the province including recommendations concerning screening, on line interventions and full pathway implementation.

Alcohol Care Pathway

Alcohol-related harm is a major public health problem. According to the WHO (2011), harmful use of alcohol is the third leading risk factor for disease and disability in the high income countries like Canada. Alcohol use is implicated in a wide variety of health, social and legal problems. It is a major cause of cancer, injury and trauma. Common medical conditions such as hypertension, gastritis, diabetes, etc., as well as mental disorders, such as depression, can be aggravated by even short term alcohol use (Butt, et al., 2010).

In collaboration with a variety of stakeholders, the SCN has identified alcohol care across the continuum as a key area for project development. A group of expert clinicians, researchers, and administrators have been brought together and have identified some key areas for reassessment of the way services are provided for people using and misusing alcohol in Alberta. Those key areas are being investigated deeper from a clients perspective and a data perspective. It is anticipated that the prioritized themes will be brought to the SCN den in the fall of 2013 for executive direction and endorsement.

More Information

In the coming months we will keep you posted on the work of our Addiction & Mental Health SCN. If you wish to learn more, or become more involved, please contact:

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