



# PROVINCIAL ADDICTION & MENTAL HEALTH

## Integrated Provincial Program

### Contact

#### [Leadership team](#)

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### Key Partners

[Addiction & Mental Health Provincial Advisory Council](#)

[Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction | Alberta.ca](#)

Strategic Clinical Networks

## Major initiatives and achievements, 2022-2023

Provincial Addiction and Mental Health (PAMH) is leading a number of research initiatives that focus on service delivery and improving health outcomes and working with health and community partners. Several of these projects involve innovative models of care, including digital health services that bring care to individuals wherever they live. Others focus on inter-sectoral data sharing and enhancing analytics related to substance use and health care utilization.

### Expanding research opportunities with the Virtual Opioid Dependency Program

Many individuals who live with opioid use disorder (OUD) visit emergency departments (EDs) and urgent care centres (UCCs) because of an overdose, withdrawal symptoms, or other issues related to opioid use. The Virtual Opioid Dependency Program (VODP) offers technology-delivered, same-day medication starts, opioid treatment transition service, and ongoing opioid dependency care.

Within the framework of the VODP, there are several research initiatives in the planning stages to assess the impact of treatments provided. This work supports patient care for Albertans living with opioid use disorder and aims to lessen demands on emergency services.

### eMental Health services for youth and young adults

The use of eMental Health services for youth and young adults with mental health and substance use issues is being implemented and evaluated to improve quality of services and mental health outcomes of young people. The program uses measurement-based care to assess and track client outcomes, and provides apps and e-tools as additional supports to in-person care. Outcome assessment is currently underway.



The research component of this work focuses on measuring client outcomes and provider satisfaction with the tool. The aim is to empower patient-centered and recovery-oriented care. If successful, the use of this platform can provide improved and more effective care at the community level that may divert use of more costly services (inpatient and emergency) by creating opportunities for earlier intervention.

### Comprehensive assessment of the Provincial Mental Health Diversion Program

This project involves a comprehensive economic assessment of the Alberta Diversion Program, which is delivered by the AHS Addiction and Mental Health team. PAMH has supported this work by providing advice during methods development and leading the ethics submission. As this is a complex project that involves data sharing between the Alberta Ministry of Justice and AHS, extensive support is required to navigate data sharing and privacy protocols. A sub-study to assess potential de-identification methods has been included in this work, led by PAMH in collaboration with researchers at the University of Calgary. This work is in the initial stages and is expected to continue through 2023-24.

### Cannabis research on health system impacts of cannabis use

Cannabis use in Canada is of interest to policymakers, researchers, and clinicians due to the novelty of legalization and increased accessibility to the drug after legalization in 2018. PAMH has been highly involved in researching the health system impacts of cannabis use, as well as clinical issues related to problematic cannabis use. Our team has been at the forefront in building an evidence base for the prevalence of cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome; in particular, looking at its burden on Alberta's emergency departments (EDs) and how this syndrome is found to be positively correlated with cannabis use disorder. This work may help inform clinical care, planning and decision making.

PAMH has also studied the impacts of cannabis legalization and its subsequent burden on the health care system in Alberta and in Canada, with particular emphasis on ED presentations and inpatient admissions. Our research found that while there was an initial increase in ED presentations during the first year of cannabis legalization, this rate has since steadied. Through our cannabis research, we have also discovered gaps in cannabis-related patient documentation (primary care and emergency care). In response, we have investigated current documentation standards and made recommendations for future data collection.

## Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS) treatment completion

Alberta's provincial repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) program launched in 2019, and data from four sites (two in Edmonton and two in Calgary) has been monitored by the PAMH evaluation team. Prior interim reports, using data from rTMS patients who completed treatment and have admission and discharge records available, produced consistent evidence of **strong positive effects on reduced depressive symptomatology and clients' state of health and functionality**.

In an additional examination of three years of data, rTMS treatment completion was not associated with client demographics, including age, gender, and level of education. While larger distances from treatment sites and longer travel times were associated with higher percentages of non-completion, the magnitude of these differences was small. Overall, these results indicate that there are no structural biases influencing treatment completion rates.

## Other partnerships and outcome improvements

### CRISM-AHS advancement of analytics in substance use

Alberta Health Services and the Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse (CRISM) have held a long-standing partnership to promote innovation in analytics related to substance use and health care utilization. With the integration of the Addiction and Mental Health SCN and the Provincial Addiction and Mental Health program, the CRISM partnership now falls under PAMH Applied Research & Innovation. The long-term goal of this partnership is to support access to substance use and mental health (AMH) client data from relevant health care services and programs in AHS for researchers and to promote innovative analytic projects. Through this partnership, we are building regional capacity for AMH research and quality improvement, and are promoting innovation in data analytics related to substance use and health care utilization.

## Impacts on health and care

PAMH supports many facets of addiction and mental health care to positively impact health outcomes, increase access to addiction and mental health services, and address capacity through innovation and collaboration with health and community partners. Over the past year, PAMH has been actively involved in evaluating the impact of innovative care models and cannabis use on health system utilization in Alberta. The team has also secured nearly \$6 million for grant-funded research on AMH in Alberta. The vast majority of these grants have come from outside the province (CIHR).



### What's next: Actions and areas of focus

Our upcoming initiatives will be driven by the following priorities:

- ▶ Improving access to services and continuity of care
- ▶ Expanding delivery of virtual health services
- ▶ Engagement with internal and external stakeholders to advance data sharing processes that support comprehensive planning of AMH services
- ▶ Focusing on equitable service delivery for underserved populations with AMH concerns, including children and youth, and Indigenous populations

## PROVINCIAL ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH

### Grants and Publications



31

Peer-reviewed  
Publications



6

Workshops & Presentations



\$5.9M

Research Grants



245

Research members

### Outcomes and Impact

Evaluation of rTMS in Alberta showed

**strong positive effects in reducing symptoms of depression & improving patients' state of health and functionality.**

No significant differences were observed based on patient age, gender, or education.

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