



Wellness Articles

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Giving people a voice in mental health research

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The Mental Health Commission of Canada reports that in a given year, one in five people in Canada experiences a mental health problem or illness. In Alberta, that's more than 675,000 people.

Researchers and clinicians in the province recognize the need to learn more about mental health, but realize most research topics are chosen by the researcher, not the people living with mental illness. A new study partly funded by Alberta Innovates (previously Alberta Innovates – Health Solutions) is changing that. This fall, the Alberta Depression Research Priority Setting Project surveyed people who have experienced depression, as well as their clinicians and caregivers, to pinpoint gaps in current research.

“Someone with lived experience will likely have a different perspective than someone doing the research,” explains Robbie Babins-Wagner, PhD, a professor at the University of Calgary Faculty of Social Work and a member of the project’s advisory group.

Researchers are analyzing the survey answers to better understand the needs of people who experience depression. And what they find will shape research to help meet their needs. “This will allow the voice of people living with and caring for mental illness to influence research projects,” adds Babins-Wagner.