

## GPSC and HealthLink BC pilot mental health and addiction resource directory

**T**he General Practice Services Committee (GPSC) this April will launch a \$1.17 million, 3-month pilot project linking central Vancouver Island physicians with mental health and addiction resources for patients through a new, secure, web-based database. If successful, the Community Healthcare and Resource Directory (CHARD) will expand across BC and include other health specialties.

“A system like CHARD promises significant benefits for a range of groups,” says Dr David Attwell, who championed the project as GPSC co-chair several years ago and now sits on the CHARD advisory committee. “Patients get referred quickly to the appropriate care provider, government has access to information for health system planning, and GPs and their staff have a list of patient care resources literally at their fingertips.”

Specialists and other health care providers will also benefit. Specialists will receive more appropriate referrals and therefore have fewer patients to triage while other providers will have the opportunity to profile their work and services.

Attwell says it’s not easy for physicians to find the services or specialists their patients need: “It can be a time-consuming, trial-and-error-type process, involving their local knowledge, what they hear from colleagues, and often a lot of research by their medical office assistant.”

Lack of information is not the problem, stresses Attwell. “Physicians receive an overwhelming volume and diversity of information in hard copy or electronically, so much so that it’s difficult to track and manage,” he says. “Unfortunately, if it’s not need-

ed right away, it gets filed and forgotten, or thrown away.”

CHARD, operating in partnership with HealthLink BC, will cut down on the time, effort, and frustration involved in finding vital information

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for patient referrals by offering a password-protected, searchable database. Physicians and their MOAs will be able to easily find detailed information such as:

- Practitioner or service hours of operation.
- Whether a practitioner or program is accepting new patients.
- Any restrictions on the age or type of patient seen by a practitioner or service.
- Referral procedures.
- Languages spoken.
- Practitioner’s research interests and therapeutic approaches.
- Maps showing the location of the service or practitioner.

For the April–June pilot project, public and private mental health and addiction services and programs will be listed, as well as occupational therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical counsellors, and pharmacies that dispense methadone. The directory will be populated with relevant information from the current HealthLink BC directory, assuming practitioners’ consent. Professional colleges have also been asked to recommend resources for inclusion in the directory.

More than 300 GPs from the central Vancouver Island area (approximately Duncan to Campbell River) have been invited to participate through letters and phone calls. Interested physicians who work in the pilot area and would like to participate can find more information on the BCMA web site: [www.bcma.org/community-healthcare-and-resource-directory-chard](http://www.bcma.org/community-healthcare-and-resource-directory-chard).

Once the pilot is complete and the feedback from participating physicians is analyzed, GPSC will look at making the directory available across BC and expanding the program to include resources in more specialty areas.

“It was important to target a specific region of the province and a specific specialty area in order to get this right from the start,” says Attwell, a Victoria-based GP for the past 15 years. “That said, the potential for CHARD, and for the health system overall, is huge.”

The GPSC, a committee of the Ministry of Health Services and the BCMA, administers approximately \$146 million annually through programs and incentives to support general practitioners in BC. GPSC initiatives include:

- Incentives for mental health, maternity care, complex care, care of the frail elderly, and end-of-life care.
- Practice Support Program (PSP).
- Family Physicians for BC (FPs4BC).
- Divisions of Family Practice.
- Chronic Disease Prevention and Management.

For more information visit [www.bcma.org](http://www.bcma.org).

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