

Alternate model of care improves patient access to psychiatric treatment

An innovative initiative funded by the joint BCMA/Ministry of Health Shared Care Committee is improving access to psychiatric care for patients with mood disorders. The Rapid Access to Psychiatry initiative has accelerated the wait time for psychiatric consultation and care from 5 to 6 months¹ from GP referral to within 4 to 6 weeks.

Using an alternate model of care that includes group medical visits and e-mail communication between psychiatrists and patients, the initiative expands the treatment options that family physicians can offer to patients who are suffering from a range of conditions, including depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder, as well as patients with substance abuse issues and comorbid psychiatric conditions.

The initiative began when psychiatrists Drs Ron Remick, Chris Gorman, and Judy Allen established the Mood Disorders Association of British Columbia (MDABC) Psychiatric Urgent Care Program at the MDABC premises in Vancouver, offering group medical visits to patients on a part-time basis. With funding from the Shared Care Committee, they were able to recruit additional psychiatrists and secure administrative support and space to hold additional group visits at the MDABC site.

Patients referred to the program receive a 50-minute one-on-one consultation by a psychiatrist, who within a week provides them and the referring family physician with a written consultation that includes a diagnosis and treatment recommendation. Patients

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can then choose either to have their family doctor initiate psychiatric treatment or to attend the drop-in group medical visits and have program psychiatrists direct their medical care. They can also choose to receive follow-up treatment through future drop-in group medical visits or e-mail communication with program psychiatrists. Funding from the Specialist Services Committee supports specialist fees for the group medical visits and e-mail communication.

Psychiatrists encourage patients to maintain treatment through weekly attendance at group sessions, but the initiative does enable patients to choose both the mode and frequency of their treatment, as well as provide them and their family physicians with ongoing, indefinite access to program psychiatrists via e-mail.

This model of care enables one full-time equivalent psychiatrist to assess 6.7 times as many new patients and conduct 553 more follow-up visits per annum than a psychiatrist providing traditional outpatient psychiatric care. It is also almost three times less costly per annum for moderate cases and more than four times less costly for severe cases than traditional psychiatric outpatient care.²

Feedback on the initiative has been positive. Family physicians surveyed reported a high level of satisfaction with timely patient access to care. Patients surveyed reported a high level of satisfaction with wait times, quality of care, and quality of information, and were satisfied with the wait time for referrals—67% said they attended the group medical visits because of faster access to psychiatric care. Additionally, patients reported that participation in the initiative had enhanced

their self-management skills.³

Due to proximity, the majority of patients who have participated in the group medical visits held in Vancouver reside in the Lower Mainland, but there are no geographical restrictions to participation.

Development of a similar system of care in Victoria is under discussion, with proposed plans to link group medical visits with community services, including evidence-based, supported self-management programs like Bound Back and Living Life to the Full.

Expansion of the initiative to sites including Vancouver's Langara College campus, Abbotsford, Whistler, Vernon, Penticton, and sites servicing the South Asian community in Surrey, is also under discussion, and some Kamloops physicians have initiated group medical visits for patients with psychiatric conditions in their community.

Rapid Access to Psychiatry is one of a suite of Shared Care initiatives that aim to improve health outcomes and the patient journey through the health care system by improving coordination of care between family and specialist physicians and access to specialist consultation and care.

For group medical visit schedules and to learn more about referrals to the MDABC Psychiatric Urgent Care Program, visit www.mdabc.net/psychiatric-urgent-care-program.

For more information on the Rapid Access to Psychiatry initiative, visit www.bcma.org/rapid-access-psychiatry-program-psychiatric-urgent-care-initiative.

—Gordon Hoag, MD

—Kelly McQuillen

Co-chairs, Shared Care Committee

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HPV vaccine reduces infections in teen girls by half: Study

A study published in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases* shows that the HPV vaccine has reduced the infection rate in teenage girls by more than half, despite low vaccine uptake. The study, published in June, is titled “Reduction in Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Prevalence Among Young Women Following HPV Vaccine Introduction in the United States, National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys, 2003–2010.”

Study authors analyzed HPV prevalence data from the vaccine era (2007 to 2010), and the prevaccine era (2003 to 2006) and determined that among females aged 14 to 19 years, the vaccine-type HPV prevalence (HPV-6, -11, -16, or -18) decreased from 11.5% in 2003 to 2006 to 5.1% in 2007 to 2010, a decline of 56%. Among other age groups, the prevalence did not differ significantly between the two time periods ($P > .05$). The vaccine effectiveness of at least one dose was 82.

The study can be viewed at <http://jid.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2013/06/18/infdis.jit192.abstract?sid=653a60ed-1463-4598-83ba-438fe9b32c42>.

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2013 BCMA scholarship winners

The BCMA Scholarship awards three \$500 scholarships to children of BCMA members who display outstanding scholastic achievement, remarkable volunteer contributions, and well-rounded extracurricular interests. Winners are selected by BCMA committee members through an anonymous process.

Janine De Klerk



Award in 2011 and Maxima Cum Laude every year from 2010 to 2012. She also won Duke of Edinburgh awards in 2010, 2011, and 2013. An aspiring physician, Ms De Klerk will be attending McMaster University this fall. Her volunteer experience includes working with the St. John Ambulance’s Pet Therapy Program at the Willow Senior Living Residence, participating in the Youth Ventures Program in Maple Ridge, and peer tutoring in French and Spanish. Ms De Klerk enjoys extracurricular activities including piano, photography, yearbook club, grad committee, and theatre.

Adam Mitha



Medical School. This accelerated pro-

gram will give him the opportunity to advance to med school after 2 years in the Faculty of Arts and Science and obtain his MD in 6 years instead of 8. Mr Mitha’s academic achievements include being selected to participate in the Oxbridge Summer Program at Oxford University in the summer of 2011, majoring in medical science and minoring in British history. He also won Duke of Edinburgh awards in 2010 and 2011.

Mr Mitha’s extracurricular activities include piano, student council, web design, soccer, and tennis, and he is also a student committee member on the City of West Vancouver Community Web Taskforce. He has volunteered as a fundraising team leader for the World Partnership Walk and as a clinic volunteer for Canadian Blood Services, as well as peer tutoring at his school.

Mr Chow, another aspiring physician, attended Sentinel Secondary School and has been accepted into the Queen’s University Faculty of Life Science to study biological sciences. His extracurricular activities include competitive swimming and playing jazz trombone, and he has a second-degree black belt in karate. He has worked as a karate instructor, swim instructor, lifeguard, and assistant swim coach for the Hollyburn Hurricanes. Mr Chow’s volunteer work includes a medical volunteer trip to Mongolia, where he assisted with deliveries in the Ulaanbaatar Maternity Hospital.

Ryan Yip-Kwan Chow



The *BC Medical Journal* congratulates all these exceptional students and wishes them the best in their future studies.