



News Release

Family physicians and mental health care providers working together to improve access to services for patients

(November 26, Mississauga, ON) Today, the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC), in collaboration with the Canadian Psychiatric Association and the Canadian Psychological Association, released a new resource in the Innovation in Primary Care (IPC) series, *Integrating Mental Health Services in Primary Care*.

It features case examples from British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and one specific to Manitoba's Cree communities. The case examples address common challenges and barriers to integrating mental health services, with particular emphasis in psychological and psychiatric services, in community-based practices. A full copy of the issue can be accessed on the CFPC website at <https://www.cfpc.ca/CFPC/media/PDF/IPC-Mental-Health-Report-2020-Final.pdf>.

Some key lessons learned in the case examples shared include:

- Provision of mental health services, such as psychological and psychiatric services, offered in a familiar clinical environment improves the patient experience and reduces barriers to timely care
- Collaboration among federal, provincial, territorial, and community-based organizations can support the implementation of innovative solutions that improve care delivery and are easy for patients to access and navigate
- Engagement of patients and their families is important to encourage and empower patients to take an active role in managing long-standing or recurring mental health issues
- Provision of team-based care—particularly in remote communities serving Indigenous populations—must be led by and respond to the needs of the communities they serve as well as their historical, cultural, socioeconomic, and political contexts

“Family doctors are often the first point of contact for patients experiencing mental health issues and they play a critical role in providing and coordinating access to mental health services,” says Francine Lemire, MD CM, CCFP, FCFP, CAE, ICD.D, CFPC’s Executive Director and CEO. “Cultivating approaches for the adoption of team-based primary care, that includes important mental health services and supports, can help providers bridge the gap for patients and families by providing care that is collaborative, continuous, and comprehensive.”

“These case studies underscore the important and innovative roles psychologists play in collaborating with family physicians to improve timely access to quality mental health care,” said Dr. Karen Cohen, CEO of the Canadian Psychological Association.

“Supportive and collaborative partnerships between psychiatrists, family physicians and psychologists are key to efficient use of resources, enhanced capacity of primary care to respond to common mental health problems, and improved care for people with ongoing psychiatric and medical problems, particularly vulnerable or isolated populations,” said Dr. Grainne Neilson, president of the Canadian Psychiatric Association.

Improving people’s access to mental health services and supports in a primary care setting requires the leadership and collaboration of a team of interprofessional care providers, a central tenet of the CFPC’s Patient’s Medical Home vision. This latest IPC issue demonstrates innovative models of care that have successfully integrated mental health assessments, psychological and psychiatric services, and referrals for patients requiring additional community supports and follow-up.

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About the College of Family Physicians of Canada

The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) is the professional organization that represents more than 40,000 members across the country. The College establishes the standards for and accredits postgraduate family medicine training in Canada’s 17 medical schools. It reviews and certifies continuing professional development programs and materials that enable family physicians to meet certification and licensing requirements. The CFPC provides high-quality services, supports family medicine teaching and research, and advocates on behalf of the specialty of family medicine, family physicians, and the patients they serve.

About the Canadian Psychiatric Association

Founded in 1951, the Canadian Psychiatric Association (CPA) is the national voice for Canada’s 4,800 psychiatrists and 900 psychiatric residents. Psychiatrists are medical doctors who provide assessment, treatment and rehabilitation care to people with psychiatric disorders in order to prevent, reduce and eliminate the symptoms and subsequent disabilities resulting from mental illness or disorder. As an evidence-based profession, CPA provides advice on the most effective programs, services and policies to achieve the best mental health care for Canadians.

About the Canadian Psychological Association

The Canadian Psychological Association is the national voice for the science, practice and education of psychology in the service of the health and welfare of Canadians. The CPA is Canada’s largest association for psychology and represents psychologists in public and private practice, university educators and researchers, as well as students. Psychologists are the



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country's largest group of regulated and specialized mental health providers, making the profession a key resource for the mental health treatment Canadians need.

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