ACCESS–MH
Atlantic Canada Children’s Effective Service Strategies in Mental Health

Barriers and Facilitators in Access to Child/Youth Mental Health Services

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www.access-mentalhealth.ca
A research program funded by Canadian Institute for Health Research – Team Grant–Community–Based Primary Healthcare theme

Theme of the funded projects (we are one of twelve nation–wide) is to re–examine the role of primary care providers.
Principal Investigators

- Dr. Rick Audas (Nominated PI) – Health Economist – MUN
- Dr. Scott Ronis (PI) – Psychologist – UNB
- Dr. Kate Tilleczek (PI) – Canada Research Chair and Sociologist – UPEI
- Dr Michael Zhang (PI) – Operations Research Expert – SMU
Collaborators

- Marshall Godwin – Director of Primary Healthcare Research Unit – MUN
- Roger Chafe – Director of Pediatric Health Research Unit – MUN
- William Montelpare – Chair of Margaret and Wallace McCain Chair in Human Development and Health – UPEI
- Weiqiu Yu – Health Economist – UNB
- Bronwyn Davies – VP Population Health and Continuing Care – Gov NB
- Colleen Simms – Dept of Health and Community Services – Gov NL
- Reid Burke – ED of Canadian Mental Health Association – PEI Chapter
- Donald MacDonald – VP Research and Development – NL Centre for Health Information
- Julie MacDonald – Manager Child and Adolescent Mental Health – NS
The Problem...

- Treatment for children with mental health conditions can be provided by many different types of professionals spanning health, education and others.
- Care is typically not well coordinated.
- Families get frustrated with this and many seek private care.
- But access to private treatment is costly and not within the means of all who would benefit.
Aim of Research Program

- To bring together an inter-sectorial and inter-disciplinary team of decision makers, clinicians, and academic researchers from across Atlantic Canada to take a diverse approach to studying several mental health and behavioural conditions.

- To develop evidence supported resource maps to indicate to a wide range of stakeholders what services are available, how treatments can be accessed and their comparative effectiveness.
Conditions

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Conduct Disorder
- Eating Disorders
- Depression
- Anxiety
Approaches to study Conditions

- Patient Journeys
- Analysis of Large and Complex Data Sets
- Operations Research
- Comparative Policy Analysis
Children with complex mental health conditions are poorly managed and coordinated by providers.

That socio-economic status matters. Mental health conditions are more common among those with the fewest means and SES is adversely impacted by mental health conditions.

There are significant differences across jurisdictions. Need to find out what works.

Aim to develop resource maps for families, providers (in both health and education) and policy makers.
Patient Journeys

- Used to describe the clinical pathways through which treatment has been received.
- Approach is qualitative, relying on families telling their (horror?) stories about seeking and receiving treatment.
- Intend to conduct approximately 250 interviews across the regions.
- PJ Bootcamp for students
Analysis of Data Sets

- Each condition will be explored using available and administrative and survey databases.
- Such as:
  - National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth
  - National Health Survey
  - Canadian Community Health Survey
  - Data maintained by the Health and Education systems in each province.
  - Other data sources
Aim to develop a comprehensive picture of ASD service utilization across all four Atlantic Provinces.

Anticipate challenges merging and building datasets.

Aim to have researchers here and in other provinces collaborating.
In healthcare, Operations Research (OR) techniques have been used to achieve success in strategic planning and resource allocation.

The following techniques will be applied:

- Simulation modeling
- Systems analysis tools and process modeling
- Queuing optimization
Autism Spectrum Disorder

- There is significant interest in the project to study ASD.
- Patrick Murphy (supervised by Roger Chafe) is interested in examining transitions from the youth system to the adult system.
- Laura Hurley (supervised my Kate Tilleczek and me) is looking at early diagnosis and treatment.
- Both will rely on qualitative research methods and will conduct interviews with families, service providers and policy makers.
We are also currently seeking funding to conduct a thorough needs assessment of the ASD community in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Working in collaboration with ASNL to secure funding

Aim is to reach out to ASNL membership and a wide range of service providers and stakeholders in the ASD community.
Also want to reach beyond ASNL membership. Will be a challenge.

Wide focus on children, youth and adults and across the spectrum.

Working with numerous prospective business partners.

Want to try to build a ‘resource map’ to identify where families experiencing ASD can go to access a variety of services.
Lots of timely and important work being done.

We have integrated the research program with the ARTC Master’s in Applied Health Services Research.

Several students working on the project now (Michael Bartellas and Shauna Wells in addition to Hurley and Murphy.) A PhD student based in Halifax (Mackenzie) and several more at UNB. Hoping to add a PhD student here (Clair) as well as a Post–doctoral researcher.