

# Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 by Generating a Policy-Oriented Action Plan



## to Strengthen Mental Health Services in Primary Health Care (PHC)



Maya Dancey<sup>1</sup>, Rachelle Ashcroft<sup>2</sup>, Keith Adamson<sup>2</sup>, Toula Kourgiantakis<sup>2</sup>, Anne Kirvan<sup>2</sup>, Lisa Dolovich<sup>3</sup>, Catherine Donnelly<sup>4</sup>, Judy Belle Brown<sup>5</sup>, David Verrilli<sup>6</sup>, Sandeep Gill<sup>7</sup>, Deepy Sur<sup>8</sup>, Kavita Mehta<sup>7</sup>

(1) Telfer School of Management, University of Ottawa, (2) Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, (3) Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Toronto, (4) Health Services and Policy Research Institute, Queen's University, (5) Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, Western University, (6) Village Family Health Team and Centre for Addictions and Mental Health, (7) Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario, (8) Ontario Association of Social Workers

### BACKGROUND 1-2

Understanding how the demand and delivery of mental health (MH) care during the first-wave of COVID-19 will help strengthen PHC's capacity to meet the demands for MH care throughout the pandemic and beyond.

### METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative research methods
- Virtual semi-structured focus groups (N=10)
- Participants are interprofessional Ontario Family Health Teams
- Aiming to conduct 2 focus groups in each of the 5 Ontario Health Regions
- 3 focus groups completed to date



### OBJECTIVES

- Determine how MH services in PHC should be delivered during and post COVID-19
- Identify what mental health services are appropriate for virtual appointments, and what types of mental health services are appropriate for in-person appointments

### FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

- What differences have you seen in your patients' MH care needs since COVID-19?
- What challenges have you experienced in providing MH care since COVID-19?
- What specific MH services are working best through virtual care (e.g. telephone & video)?

**"We've seen a lot more anxiety...isolation and loneliness, and...difficulty adjusting to everything being online and not having the [typical] social interactions"**

**"I've had...patients say too that doing [MH care] over the phone, they find it less stigmatizing"**

Focus Group Participants

### REFERENCES

1. Duan, L., & Zhu, G. (2020). Psychological interventions for people affected by the COVID-19 epidemic. *The Lancet. Psychiatry*, 7(4), 300–302.
2. Findlay, L.C., Arim, R., & Kohen, D. (2020). Understanding the perceived mental health of Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Health Reports*, 31(4), 22–27. Stats Can.