INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY CARE ENHANCEMENTS FOR IMPROVED PATIENT OUTCOMES

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The Community Care Team at Health for All Family Health Team has implemented impactful initiatives that significantly improve patient experience and health outcomes while reducing healthcare costs. By enhancing outreach strategies, conducting needs assessments, and introducing innovative therapies and programs, the team addresses the diverse needs of the Eastern York Region community. Their collaborative efforts in mental health, social support, dietary counseling, and primary care services have led to improvements in patient well-being and community health.

KEY INITIATIVES

- Conducted needs assessments to tailor programs and services
- Introduced innovative programs for mental health, dietary counseling, and primary care services
- Enhanced outreach strategies to address community needs
- Improved patient experience and health outcomes while reducing healthcare costs

INITIATIVE IMPACTS 2022-2023

- Increased access to preventative care, including cervical cancer screening through community partner referrals and self-referrals
- Over 150 unattached patients now connected to primary care
- CBT-Insomnia program improved sleep for 85+ participants
- Increase in program participation and community partnerships through increased outreach activities
- Positive patient feedback on services

CURRENT INTERVENTIONS TO ENHANCE ACCESS TO CARE

- **Primary Care Service:** Comprehensive primary care, chronic disease management, preventive care delivered by primary care nurse practitioner for patients across the age continuum
- **Woman's Clinic:** Cervical cancer screening, IUD and pessary care for attached and unattached patients
- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-i):** 4-part in-person group series workshop aimed at improving sleep in adults, minimize drug therapy, deprescribe if needed
- **DBT Skills Group:** Workshops aimed to teach skills in Distress Tolerance, Emotional Regulation, and Interpersonal Effectiveness and help participants manage crises, regulate emotions, and improve relationships
- **CBT Psychoeducation Group:** 6-week series workshop series aimed to help participants modify unhelpful thinking and behavior patterns, CBT skills for day-to-day challenges
- **Nutritional Workshops:** Topics: Healthy Eating for Diabetes; Healthy Eating for Heart Health; Emotional Eating
- **Smoking Cessation Program:** Individual counselling sessions to support patients quit smoking or vaping
- **Diabetes Program:** Provide group and individual diabetes education sessions and group sessions every 6 weeks (in-person, virtual) and individual sessions
- **Individualized 1:1 Programs to support attached and unattached patients**
  - Dietitian services
  - Counselling services
  - Case Management (system navigation, connection to community services)
  - Medication reconciliation
  - Primary care and preventive care clinic
- **Collaborations & Community Engagement:** Presentations delivered on request from community partners; Community outreach and partnerships with local organizations

IDENTIFYING CRITICAL GAPS IN CARE: THE NEED FOR ENHANCED ACCESS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

- Primary Care Access: Improved access to primary care is linked to fewer emergency department visits, hospital admissions, surgeries, and lower healthcare costs (Glass et al., 2017).
- Cervical Cancer Screening: Cervical cancer is almost entirely preventable through the HPV vaccine, regular Pap testing, and timely follow-up of abnormal results. However, women who are under- or never-screened, particularly South Asian women in Ontario, are at a higher risk of developing the disease. Lack of a primary care provider is also linked to lower adherence to screening guidelines (Benjamin et al., 2023; Devotta, 2023).
- Mental Health and Substance Use: Canadians are expressing a rising need for mental health care while facing various obstacles to accessing these services (CIHI, 2024). Nearly 10% of Canadians who visit the emergency room for mental health or substance use concerns are frequent users, returning at least four times annually. This indicates a gap in community-based support and services for these individuals (CIHI, 2022).
- Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD): BPD poses a significant public health challenge, and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) has been shown to be an effective treatment for managing the condition (Hernandez-Bustamante, 2024).
- Rising Mental Health ED Visits: Visits to the emergency department for mental health concerns continue to increase, highlighting a growing need for comprehensive mental health services (Baia Medeiros et al., 2018).

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