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WENDY NICKLIN
President and Chief Executive Officer
Accreditation Canada

Breaking Down Invisible Walls



Dialogue about mental health illness has changed significantly in recent years. This is largely the result of mental health care providers and consumers having strongly advocated for a reduction in the stigma and social exclusion associated with mental illness. They have also promoted treatment that is focused on recovery and that is community-based, so patients can access appropriate care more easily and with less fear of encountering stigma or other invisible barriers to care. As a result, we are hopeful that more people are seeking the help they need to combat mental illnesses.

Governments have also begun to focus on mental health as an integral part of the health care continuum. Many services that were once part of a fractured mental health care system are being connected in a way that makes sense for patients, funders, and health care providers. Mental health is finally beginning to receive the attention it deserves.

In this issue of *Qmentum Quarterly*, Bruce Swan describes the steps his team took in developing a systems approach to service delivery, by moving toward an integrated mental health system to improve access and reduce wait time to service.

Danielle Corbeil, David Bérubé, Louise Beauvais, and Marc Pineault offer us a view of their hospital's program, which is aimed at preventing aggressive behavior and violence by mental health patients.

Given the current emphasis on treating mental illnesses outside of institutions, it was apparent to Accreditation Canada that there was a need to strengthen the emphasis on the community aspect of mental health services in its *Qmentum* accreditation program. Karen Kieley therefore discusses Accreditation Canada's new Community-Based Mental Health Services and Supports Standards, and helps us understand their key elements.

Ian Manion provides us with insight into youth mental illness and suicide. This subject has received media attention in recent months, but as Ian reminds us, changing the system

and monitoring interventions is the only way to garner long-lasting change in this area.

Joanne MacDonald and Coleen Flynn have worked on an educational resource that addresses women's mental health issues, particularly those affecting new mothers. Their toolkit targets frontline social service workers who are in regular contact with women whose mental health issues may not yet be diagnosed.

Delena Tikk and Darien Thira's work at a healing centre enables us to consider a mental health treatment program that combines Western and traditional Aboriginal healing techniques.

Alan Stevenson and Patti Lauzon present an innovative community-based discharge planning service that has significantly reduced their hospital's readmission rates for mental health patients.

Louise Bradley of the Mental Health Commission of Canada challenges us to think about how to transform Canada's current mental health services into a recovery-oriented system.

And finally, Kevin Kok, Marg Petty, Liana Philips, and Nicky Gitlin remind us of the need to attend to the physical as well as the mental health needs of individuals with psychotic disorders.

As the achievements of these authors suggests, Canadian health services are moving in new directions in order to provide more relevant and timely access to appropriate services for loved ones who are coping with mental health conditions. I congratulate the authors on their efforts and thank them for sharing their inspiring practices!

Wendy Nicklin