

Helping Ontarians Living with Mental and Physical Illnesses

Ontario Teaming Up With Mental Health Leaders to Create Medical Psychiatry Alliance

NEWS

January 28, 2014

Ontario is helping up to 500,000 people who are either at-risk of, or currently living with both physical and mental illnesses, get the care and treatment they need.

The province is joining forces with The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), Trillium Health Partners, the University of Toronto and a private donor to provide a total of \$60 million in new funding for the creation of the Medical Psychiatry Alliance.

The Medical Psychiatry Alliance members will lead the initiative, which will support people across the province over the next six years by:

- Developing new screening and diagnostic tools to ensure patients are properly diagnosed.
- Ensuring physical and mental illnesses are treated simultaneously so patients and their families receive the best care available.
- Developing specialized clinical training for medical students focused on the management of co-occurring physical and mental illness.
- Creating a simulation centre for students and professionals to learn and test new approaches to treating physical and mental illness using actor patients in realistic scenarios.
- Researching and testing new ways to deliver psychiatric care at home.

Helping people with physical and mental illnesses supports [Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy](#) and [Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care](#), by providing the right mental health care, at the right time and in the right place. This is part of the Ontario government's economic plan to invest in people, build modern infrastructure and support a dynamic and innovative business climate.

QUOTE

"Mental illness is often hidden within the symptoms of physical disorders, with treatment focusing on physical illness while the mental illness remains undiagnosed and untreated. That's why this initiative and Bell Let's Talk Day are so important – intervening early and getting patients the treatment they need will help people living with these illnesses recover better and live healthy lives."

— Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

"The lives of people with serious mental illness are 20 years shorter than those without mental illness. Our patients succumb to unrecognized or poorly managed diabetes, heart disease and cancer far more often than the rest of the population. The Medical Psychiatry Alliance will address this inequity, creating a model of coordinated and comprehensive care for our most seriously ill patients."

— Dr. Catherine Zahn, President and CEO, CAMH

“This generous support will make a significant and lasting impact on mental health care in the province. Children with medical and psychiatric illnesses have complex needs that span their development and can negatively impact their academic achievement, social adjustment and family functioning. The Medical Psychiatry Alliance will ensure access to the *right level of care, at the right time and place* through improved collaboration amongst medical and mental health services within the hospital and greater community. It will ultimately lead to improved quality of life for children and their families.”

— Dr. Michael Apkon, SickKids President and CEO

“Our patients, their families and community need more support to address the often life-long challenges of combined medical and psychiatric issues. This Alliance will be a powerful engine of change that will make a difference in their daily lives.”

— Michelle DiEmanuele, President & CEO, Trillium Health Partners

“The University of Toronto has a long and proud history of leadership and innovation in the education of mental health professionals, and of collaborative leadership in mental health care, all informed by ground-breaking research in the field. We are delighted to be a founding partner in this initiative to improve dramatically the quality of health care for the most vulnerable in our society, and for all Ontarians.”

— Professor Meric Gertler, President, University of Toronto

“The Medical Psychiatric Alliance will allow patients to access appropriate care sooner, for all of their health care needs. For too long we’ve ignored all the pieces that contribute to a healthy life. Now with this initiative mental health will no longer take a back seat to physical health.”

— Private donor

QUICK FACTS

- Ontario is providing the Medical Psychiatry Alliance with up to \$20 million over the next six years to lead the initiative.
- A private philanthropist is donating \$20 million to the work of the Medical Psychiatry Alliance over the same period. The members of the Alliance are contributing \$20 million as well.
- In Ontario, over 1.3 million people experience physical illness and mental illness at the same time.
- Up to 25 per cent of people living with chronic health issues also live with mental illnesses that contribute to their physical illness.
- Ontario is announcing this investment on Bell Canada’s Let’s Talk Day, which raises funds for mental health awareness across Canada.
- On Bell Let’s Talk Day, Bell Canada will donate 5 cents to mental health initiatives on behalf of customers for every text message sent, long distance call made, or tweet using #BellLetsTalk.

LEARN MORE

- [Ontario’s Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.](#)
- [Ontario’s Action Plan for Health Care.](#)
- [CAMH Backgrounder](#)

For public inquiries call ServiceOntario, INFOLine at 1-866-532-3161 (Toll-free in Ontario only)

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