



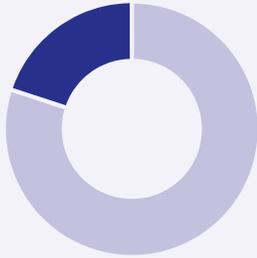
Healthcare in Crisis – The Answer to Canada’s Mental Health Challenges In Action Now

Ontario region dramatically reduces costs for mental healthcare by as much as 175% per patient with effective use of technology.

An Enormous Price to Pay

The Canadian Association of Mental Health says:

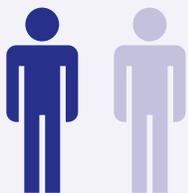
20% of Canadians suffer or have suffered with a mental illness.



In Ontario, the problem is larger; **1 in 3** Ontarians will experience mental illness at some point in their lifetimes.



As we grow older, the Canadian Association of Mental Health (CAMH) says **1 in 2** Canadians will suffer from a mental illness by the age of 40.



A 22 year-old named John has been referred by his family doctor to a psychiatrist because John has exhibited disturbing indications of unstable mental health. The doctor notes a pattern of drug use, as well. The psychiatric office contacts John to book an appointment that won't happen for 18 months.

John is already suffering and, as the weeks go by, his symptoms worsen – as does his drug use. He loses his job because of prolonged absences; he quickly runs out of money and is evicted from his small apartment.

Now he's on the streets, homeless.

This is a story that, sadly, occurs far too often in our mental healthcare system today. The cost in human terms of losing people like John can't possibly be measured.

The cost in dollars can be, however; nearly \$50 billion is spent treating mental illness, addiction and depression every year in Canada¹, not to mention the billions more in lost productivity within the economy. That represented roughly 3% of Canada's GDP in 2017.

Over the next 30 years, according to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, the total amount lost to the economy will be nearly 3 trillion dollars.

Yet, this is much more than a fiscal problem – it's very much a human one.

¹ https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2016-06/Investing_in_Mental_Health_FINAL_Version_ENG.pdf

Key Recommendations for Improvement

In 2017, Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council issued its report² on the state of mental health services in the province, part of a 10-year, one billion dollar strategy to build a comprehensive mental health and addictions system in Ontario.

The report made four recommendations, two of which relate directly to the discussion in this white paper:

- **Identify mental health issues and addictions early, and intervene.**
- **Provide timely, high quality, integrated, person-directed health and other human services.**

Achieving the goals of these two vital recommendations involves creating a new, innovative approach to capturing and diagnosing mental health problems early and providing treatment that is "timely, high quality and integrated".

It stands to reason that by utilizing existing services more efficiently, identifying and treating problems can be done faster.

More Than Money Is Required

Spending more money to buy more resources is a common means to achieving better results but it can be like pushing on a string. There will be less and less bang for the buck - a declining return on investment - unless those resources are far better managed.

They must be better managed.

Today, one of Ontario's regional health integration networks has pioneered a proven and effective way to tackle wait times and dramatically improve the odds of getting patients the help they require in a timely way, using a new, streamlined intake method.

The Commonwealth Fund, an organization that monitors healthcare policy around the world, ranked Canada dead last out of 10 nations in 2018 when it comes to timeliness of access to care.

A Breakthrough With one-Link

In 2014, the Mississauga-Halton Local Health Integration Network (MH LHIN) health region created and funded an initiative through Halton Healthcare called one-Link.

The intent was to create a coordinated access-to-service model that could identify and refer mental health clients and others to the appropriate care providers and do so in as timely a manner as possible.

It has been an enormous improvement over the ad-hoc system that existed, says Zoe Dawe, one-Link's manager.

"Before one-Link, every mental health request was funnelled to a psychiatrist. Wait times were long partly because the wrong clients were waiting for the wrong services. That's all changed with one-Link, where our service coordinators speak with the clients and determine whether the referral is accurate or if the client needs another provider."

One-Link Introduces Technology

In 2016, MH LHIN took another giant step forward with Ontario technology firm Novari Health. The two are working together to dramatically transform health services, including mental health, in the Mississauga-Halton catchment area, using proprietary Novari software and cloud technology³.

Novari Health, based in Kingston, has designed and developed an integrated software platform called Access to Care that speeds patients' access to health services in the province, reducing wait times up to 28% and directing medical resources smoothly and efficiently while ensuring a high and secure level of communication among all parties.

With support from the MH LHIN, Halton Healthcare created and staffs a Central Intake (CI) unit that uses Novari's technology. Central Intake works alongside Halton Healthcare's one-Link team, which has also adopted the Novari platform.

2 http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/bmhmbh_2017/vision_2017.pdf

3 <https://www.novarihealth.com/access-to-care-software/>

Here's how the Central Intake and one-Link system works:

1. **A primary caregiver sends a request for service that is received electronically by Central Intake, using Novari's eRequest software.**
2. **The CI staff transcribe the patient data into the Novari platform, ensuring that no fax data is ever lost and no request for service ever ignored.**
3. **The electronic data is passed on to one-Link via Novari eReferral, where one-Link nurse service coordinators complete a telephone or in person screening to determine actual needs and match the person with the right level of care documenting all data in the Novari software.**

"With one-Link, we've flipped the referral process on its head. Now, we determine the services required before we determine the provider. And, when we switched from paper to the Novari platform in 2016, everything sped up. Our wait times went from 37 days for screening to just 13, today. We can now process 70 to 100 referrals a day. We've processed over 50 thousand addiction and mental health referrals since 2016," says Zoe Dawe.



Time Saved Is Money Saved

Another significant benefit for one-Link and Halton Healthcare has been a massive reduction in the processing time for referrals from providers – up to 175 percent less time is spent on this procedure, using the Novari technology versus the traditional fax- and paper-based methods, neither of which give an accurate, real-time status report on a referral like eReferral does.

All this is having a tremendous impact on cost reduction for both Halton Healthcare and its funding source, MH LHIN.

Clearly, the one-Link initiative, combined with Novari software and cloud technology, provides a proven model for creating an efficient pathway to faster access to mental health services in Ontario – as well as the rest of Canada, for that matter.

No one knows how to eradicate mental illnesses. While tremendous medical inroads have been made in the treatment of various cancers and other physical diseases, treating mental illness is much different.

Increasing demand for mental illness and addiction services represent significant costs to the public healthcare system.

Any means by which those costs can be contained should be embraced by healthcare policy experts and politicians alike.

Novari Health, in cooperation with Halton Healthcare's one-Link, offers a highly effective method to do just that.

In 2018, Novari Health won a prestigious award from Microsoft Canada for its Access to Care platform.

Microsoft said the award recognizes and acknowledges Novari Health for its "excellence in innovation and implementation of customer solutions using Microsoft technology".



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