

Supporting Healthy Minds

Improving care for children and youth coping with mental health challenges close to home

Dawson was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia when he was eight years old. He battled through his treatments, continuing to play his beloved hockey. Two years into treatment, Dawson began over-exercising and eating very little. At the age of ten, he was diagnosed with an eating disorder. With the help of Children's Hospital at London Health Sciences Centre, today Dawson is physically and mentally healthy.

Some 70% of mental health problems and illnesses start during childhood and adolescence, and 10 to 20% of Canadian children are affected by mental illness. When children experience mental health challenges their development, family life, education and future prospects are all affected. By improving access and the quality of care provided, we can ensure that children get the care they need, when and where they need it.

Reducing Wait Times For Mental Health Services

When children experience mental health issues, they need help now. Yet there are



Dawson, age 14

"When I approach a child he inspires in me two sentiments: tenderness for what he is, and respect for what he may become."

Louis Pasteur

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extensive waiting lists for many critical services. This project focuses on developing, piloting and evaluating interventions to reduce wait times. Among the strategies: better management of wait lists and providing interim services for patients on the wait lists. Ultimately, philanthropic support for this project will ensure that more children and adolescents get the care they need, when they need it.

Mobile “Apps” For Those Waiting For Treatment

Young people are connected to their smartphones and tablets, so therapeutic mobile applications are ideally suited for this patient group. PREP, for example, is an app based on the powerful principles of motivational interviewing, which have been shown to increase engagement in therapy and lead to better outcomes. PREP provides support and helps patients prepare while they're waiting for face-to-face treatment, so that they benefit most. Other apps, in development and testing, help children monitor symptoms and remind them of strategies for dealing with issues as they arise.

Dialectical Behavioural Therapy

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) is a form of psychotherapy that combines conventional techniques with mindful awareness derived from Buddhist meditative practice. DBT may offer new hope for patients who are hard to treat – young people who have frequent visits to the Emergency Department and crisis admissions, and are at

high risk of self-harm and suicide. Funding from generous individuals and organizations will support training and evaluative research in DBT.

Risk Assessments: Suicide Screening

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among Canadians 16 to 24 years of age, accounting for 4,000 tragic deaths a year. Suicide is a complex problem with many diverse causes, but we believe it can be prevented. Doctors at Children's Hospital worked to develop a simple, short, evidence-based screening tool that can be used in schools, family doctors' offices, emergency departments, and even at home to identify young people who may be at risk of suicide. Funding from generous donors will enable the tool to be tested and shared with health professionals across the region, with full implementation by mid-2015.

Teaching Rural Physicians to Recognize Mental Health Needs

Family doctors play a critical role in recognizing and managing mental illness in children and adolescents. They are advocates, resources and care providers for the whole family. Many family doctors feel they need more education about common issues for children such as ADHD, depression, and anxiety disorders. With support from donors, this program will develop, test and implement continuing medical education programs for family doctors in rural and remote areas, with the goal of improving care for children where they live.

When you contribute to Children's Health Foundation, you're helping children be children, whether they're undergoing treatment for cancer, living with a disability, or visiting the hospital for day surgery. By supporting any one of the many programs available at Children's, you're giving a warm hug and an encouraging smile to children facing adult-sized challenges.



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