

# Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Community of Practice 8th Annual Gathering

**SUMMARY REPORT** | SEPTEMBER 2023



# Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Community of Practice | 8th Annual Gathering

On September 14, over 100 family physicians, specialists, health care providers, Ministry staff, and Doctors of BC staff came together at the Sheraton Wall Centre in Vancouver for an annual gathering focused on improving the quality of care for children and youth facing mental health and substance use issues. Here's how the day unfolded:

## TRADITIONAL WELCOME

**Elder Syexwáliya** from Squamish Nation led the group through an opening prayer, touching on the history of Squamish lands across the city and shared personal stories.

## PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

**Dr Josh Greggain**, Doctors of BC president and family physician, gave opening remarks—making mention of the recent award the Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use (CYMHSU) Community of Practice (CoP) had received and emphasizing the importance of this work in BC.



The Shared Care Committee is a partnership of Doctors of BC and the Government of BC.

## COMPASSION FATIGUE: CARING FOR OURSELVES WHILE CARING FOR OTHERS

**Dr Jennifer Mervyn**—a registered psychologist, consultant, and speaker—introduced **Dr Gabor Maté**, former family physician and renowned addiction and trauma expert. Dr Maté discussed his past experiences working with trauma survivors and those living with substance use disorder on the Downtown Eastside. He spoke about the lack of preparation that present-day physicians receive in terms of dealing with trauma and discussed the natural predisposition to being compassionate that drives physicians to choose their profession.

He also spoke about the root of addiction and substance use, which he argues is statistically and physiologically linked to childhood trauma. Dr Maté answered some questions from the audience surrounding experiences with patients dealing with addiction and trauma.



## CHILD AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH: RESEARCH FOR INFORMING PRACTICE AND POLICY

**Dr Roberto Sassi**, child and adolescent psychiatrist, associate professor at the UBC Department of Psychiatry, and psychiatrist-in-chief at BC Children's and Women's Hospitals, introduced **Dr Charlotte Waddell**, child and adolescent psychiatrist and director of the Children's Health Policy Centre in the Faculty of Health Sciences at SFU, who led a presentation on the statistics and research that is informing practice and policies for child and youth mental health.

In her presentation, Dr Waddell presented statistics on childhood disorders in BC and Canada, noting an increase in anxiety and depression over time due to COVID-19 and other factors. She described the profound consequences, both for individuals and society, that stem from a lack of mental health care access and discussed ways in which Canada can afford to publicly fund the cost of mental health care.



## ABOUT CYMHSU AND WORKING GROUP UPDATES

**Drs Shirley Sze, Rob Lehman, and David Smith**, all of whom are part of the CYMHSU CoP working group, provided an update on their strategic priorities and the current state of the CoP. They further encouraged all who were in attendance to engage with the group as they continue to work to improve the quality of care for children and youth dealing with mental health and substance use issues.



## INFORMATION BOOTHS: CHILD HEALTH BC, COMPASS, FOUNDRY, KELTY, AND RAISING RESILIENT KIDS

The working group invited the audience to step out into the hall where various child and youth mental health-related organizations had set up booths and were ready to inform attendees of the resources available within their communities.



## PRINCIPLES AND APPLICATION OF MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

**Dr Sassi** introduced **Dr Martha Ignaszewski**, psychiatrist and education lead for the Complex Pain and Addiction Service at Vancouver General Hospital, who presented on motivational interviewing (MI). She explained the drawbacks of non-motivational approaches and proceeded to define motivational interviewing, the factors that affect motivation to change, and the spirit of MI. Dr Ignaszewski further discussed strategies, elaborated on predictors of behaviour change, and emphasized the importance of engaging patients.

Attendees broke out into groups of three to practice the skills they had just learned via roleplay, where one member would play the role of client, the second member would play the role of counselor, and the third member would play the role of observer.



## EMOTION-FOCUSED FAMILY THERAPY

**Dr David Smith**, medical director for child and adolescent mental health and substance use, Interior Health Authority, introduced **Dr Ashley Miller**, child psychiatrist and senior medical director, Academics, BC Children's Hospital Psychiatry; and **Natasha Files**, registered social worker and co-founder of Mental Health Foundations, who presented on emotion-focused family therapy.

The presenters briefly went over why it is important to involve caregivers before diving into an overview of the intervention modules of emotion-focused family therapy (EFFT). They also discussed resistance, emotional blocks, and the difference between agreement versus validating an emotional experience—an important component of EFFT.



## SUMMARY AND CLOSING

**Dr Ian Schokking**, family physician and Shared Care Committee co-chair; and **Dr Rob Lehman**, family physician, summarized the day's events and gave closing remarks.



## RESOURCES

### CYMHSU Annual Gathering Resources

#### Presentations:

- [Emotion-Focused Family Therapy](#)
- [Children's Mental Health: Research for Informing Practice and Policy](#)
- [Principles and Application of Motivational Interviewing](#)

