

New videos share BC's expertise on eating disorders and care

Vancouver, BC — A series of informational videos on eating disorders diagnosis, management and treatment is being launched during National Eating Disorder Awareness Week, February 1-7. Featuring experts from BC Children's Hospital, the videos are available to families and health providers across the province.

Eating disorders are one of the most serious and deadly mental health problems in Canada. An estimated 1.5% of young women aged 15 to 24 in BC have an eating disorder and, in recent years, eating disorders in young men have also become more common. Statistics show that up to 15 per cent of individuals with eating disorders die prematurely as a direct result of their disorder.

"Having these eating disorder resources available online enables health providers and families, anywhere in BC, to easily access them at home or within their community," said Health Minister Terry Lake. "This patient-centred approach aims to provide consistent, expert care to all affected by eating disorders."

The seven informational videos were filmed at a day-long eating disorders workshop in Kimberley B.C., in which six team members from the BC Children's specialized program presented on such topics as eating disorder medical assessment and management, various therapy regimens, and meal support. The workshop was hosted by the East Kootenay Local Action Team – one of 64 in the province working as part of a provincial Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Collaborative, a partnership of Doctors of BC and the B.C. government.

"We are thrilled to be able to make these videos available. It is important to us to share the knowledge and expertise of our specialized staff with families and health care providers across all of BC, particularly in communities that may not have easy access to this information," said Sarah Bell, Provincial Executive Director, Mental Health and Concurrent Disorders Services at BC Children's Hospital.

Stephanie Cadieux, Minister of Children and Family Development agrees, "Our clinicians, as well as youth and families, will benefit from having access to the up-to-date evidence-based information in each of these videos. This will be a valuable resource and we are pleased to have been a part of its development."

A family experience was also presented at the workshop. In the video, Rylee McKinlay, 20, and her mother Terri, share their challenges and successes during Rylee's long journey with anorexia that included a nine-week inpatient stay at BC Children's Hospital when she was 16 years old. At her sickest, Rylee's heart rate was so low she was at risk of dying of a heart failure.

"Eating disorders can take years to cure, and for some there is the constant danger of relapsing, especially under times of stress," says Rylee. "But healing starts with being honest and sharing our stories to help raise awareness about this powerful disorder. If my experience can help even one person avoid what my family and I went through, it will be worth it."

You can access the videos and their transcripts, and a Q&A from the workshop [here](#).

A backgrounder with information on the videos and workshop follows.

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Background:

About the Provincial Specialized Eating Disorder Program at BC Children's Hospital

The Provincial Specialized Eating Disorder Program at BC Children's Hospital is a comprehensive, interdisciplinary, specialized program to assess and treat B.C. youth and young adults with eating disorders. The program emphasizes the involvement of parents and caregivers in the delivery of care. The program has outpatient, day treatment and inpatient services, as well as a residential live-in program delivered in partnership with the Looking Glass Foundation.

Eating Disorder Programs and Services

An online Child and Youth Mental and Substance Use Services map provides a link to services provided directly or through partnerships between regional health authorities, MCFD community-based Child and Youth Mental Health and some community agencies. <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=AFFBF8781D0D4826A756B986B0EAA4CF>

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre (located at BC Children's Hospital) provides information and resources on Eating Disorders, and can assist with locating services. <http://keltymentalhealth.ca/>

About the Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use (CYMHSU) Collaborative

The Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Collaborative involves 1,800 individuals, from multiple organizations and ministries all working together across BC to increase the number of children, youth, and their families receiving timely access to mental health services. Sixty-four Local Action Teams focus on addressing barriers to care at the community level. The Collaborative is jointly funded by Doctors of BC and the government of BC.

About the Workshop and the Local Action Team

The East Kootenay Local Action Team consists of doctors, nurses, mental health clinicians, school counsellors, community agencies, youth and families with lived experience, and more. The group decided to bring experts from BC Children's for an eating disorders workshop because eating disorders in the region were among the community's most pressing adolescent mental health concerns. More than 90 health care providers and people from schools and community agencies in the region attended the workshop.

Post workshop Improvements and Quotes

One of the workshop's lead organizers Jennifer Westcott, a regional team leader for the Ministry of Children and Family Development Child and Youth Mental Health services in Kimberley and Cranbrook, states:

"When you are in a more remote or rural location, far from Vancouver, it can be very scary to treat a youth with an eating disorder. Their health is so fragile," said Westcott. "While we can never be as specialized as the team in Vancouver, we learned key things from them that we now apply to our own practices."

"Care for youth with eating disorders immediately improved after the workshop" says Westcott. Examples include:

- a bi-monthly eating disorders clinic was established in the East Kootenay region in which local pediatricians and the MCFD clinicians see the patient and family together, enabling a more coordinated approach to ED care.
- A parent support group was created to help with issues such as family meal planning.

"Both changes have greatly improved the feeling of support for both families and care providers", says Westcott.