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MEDIA RELEASE

Canadian youth have poor access to mental health and addictions care according to first pan-provincial study

September 01, 2017

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A new report published today by a team of mental health and addictions scientists from five provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Québec) has found significant variations in access and outcomes of care and that Canadian youth have poor access to mental health and addictions care overall.

“We need national reporting on the quality of mental health and addictions care in order to improve the way mental health care is delivered to patients right across the country,” says Amanda Butler, co-author on the study, and Research Program Manager at the Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction. “Stakeholders have been calling for national reporting on the quality of mental health and addictions services for nearly two decades in Canada and this report is a first step in being able to do that.”

“Toward Quality Mental Health Services in Canada: A comparison of performance indicators across five provinces,” developed and generated the indicators using data already available from each of the five provincial health care systems.

The report was conducted by researchers at ICES, the **Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health & Addiction (CARMHA) at Simon Fraser University, The University of Calgary, Alberta Health Services, Alberta SPOR SUPPORT Unit, Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Institut national de santé publique de Québec.**

The researchers add that measuring health care performance indicators has improved care in specific areas such as diabetes and cancer, but performance indicators for mental health services have lagged behind. The production and reporting of indicators *across provinces* has been hindered by limitations in data access, a lack of common definitions and analytic processes, technical capacity, and agreement on approaches to reporting.

The report used data from each province to develop comparable provincial performance indicators for mental health and addictions. The six performance indicators are:

- Access to the same family physician for people diagnosed with a mental disorder or addiction.
- First treatment contact for a mental disorder or addiction is in an emergency department.
- Physician follow-up after hospital discharge for a mental disorder or addiction.
- Rates of suicide attempts among people diagnosed with a mental disorder or addiction.
- Suicide rates among people diagnosed with a mental disorder or addiction.
- Mortality of people diagnosed with a mental disorder or addiction.

“Toward Quality Mental Health Services in Canada: A comparison of performance indicators across five provinces,” was published today on the [CARMHA website](#).

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