

MHSU Update: October 2020



Welcome to Island Health's MHSU Update!

This communication is intended to connect Island Health staff and share developments and achievements across the MHSU portfolio.

For those who have been waiting for updates – please excuse our tardiness as we re-emerge to bring you monthly highlights!

We would like to begin by acknowledging the hard work and dedication that has attributed to not only the included mentions, but the continued efforts that support our clients and communities everyday.

Thank you for being here!

Highlights:

- MHSU & Underserved Population Objectives
- Physician Graduates & Recruitment
- Peer Support Program
- Overdose Prevention Services

Good News Stories . . .

World Mental Health Day Saturday, October 10th

MHSU Population Objectives

1. Specialized MHSU services are provided in the community
2. MHSU services are prepared to respond to COVID
3. Timely and appropriate access to tertiary, acute, and community psychiatric services for adults and children/youth are ensured
4. Individuals are supported to mitigate and reduce harmful substance use

Underserved Population Objectives

1. Health care needs of underserved recently housed individuals or those requiring housing are met
2. The unique challenges of concurrent overdose and COVID-19 emergencies are addressed

Physician Graduates & Recruitment!

There has been tremendous momentum in physician recruitment across Island Health MHSU teams. Dr. Wei Song, Department Head/Medical Director of Psychiatry, has made this initiative top priority! Operations is working collaboratively to develop strategies to ensure retention, while focusing on key areas, such as morale, education, physician experience, and resources to foster success.

We'd like to extend a warm welcome to Dr. Rachel Grimminck and Dr. Paul Ratti, who will be joining the Cowichan District Hospital (CDH), as well as Dr. Raymond Au and Dr. Tania Oommen who will be joining the Nanaimo Regional General Hospital (NRGH). These physician additions will address critical shortages and improve access to local services and supports.

We'd also like to congratulate and extend our welcome to the following new graduates: Dr. Ashley Jewett and Dr. Julia Lawrence who will be joining teams across Island Health and Dr. Ruth Stewart who will be working with the Operational Stress Injury (OSI) Clinic, helping veterans suffering from mental illnesses.



Peer Support Program Launching October 15th in 2 North, Royal Jubilee Hospital (Victoria)

The Peer Support program is an additional support that intends to bridge the gap between hospital discharge and community living. Clients receive peer support from a person with lived experience trained as a peer supporter. The service delivery model includes 1:1 matching between clients and peer supporters, informal support groups, and Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) group sessions. The Peer Support Program will begin up to 3 weeks before planned discharge, or as clients are identified by the care team, and will continue for approximately 3 months following discharge, depending on the client's needs.

We are excited to be working with Mental Health Recovery Partners South Island (MHRP SI) as the contracted agency for this new service. MHRP has extensive experience managing peer support programs. They also offer support services for family members.



Overdose Prevention Services in Comox Valley co-locate with MHSU

Individuals who use illicit drugs in the Comox Valley have received an important improvement to how front line overdose prevention services (OPS) are connected with the continuum of MHSU services in the community.

After months of planning, on September 1, a new OPS opened at Island Health's MHSU office at 941C England Avenue. It is the first time an OPS has been co-located with other Island Health MHSU services, and fully operated and staffed by MHSU, which is an important step towards strengthening the integration of overdose intervention services with other health care services.

"During the dual public health emergencies of the opioid crisis and COVID, it is crucial we provide a safe, accessible space where people can use drugs and have someone nearby to intervene if overdose occurs," says Leanne Komm, Manager, MHSU in the Comox Valley. "Our OPSs across Vancouver Island are mostly operated by community partners who are doing a great job saving lives, but we hope the Comox Valley approach will improve clients' connection with other MHSU services and supports, including treatment and recovery as defined by the person using our services."

OPS opened in the Comox Valley in 2017 and was operated by a local community partner. In the new location, the OPS will continue to provide education, supplies and witnessed consumption, and will be closely connected with MHSU services in the same building, including walk-in counselling, intake, short term assessment and treatment, and longer term therapeutic supports.

"Client feedback so far has been positive and it is seen as non-judgmental, welcoming space," says Komm. "If OPS can be embedded here, there is hope and precedent that this life-saving service can be embedded and made available across many other Island Health facilities."

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

The MHSU Leadership continues to encourage physician and staff engagement in generating transformational practices in our workplace. Please send questions or comments to Monica Flexhaug, Director, Special Projects (Monica.Flexhaug@viha.ca).

