Wood Buffalo Primary Care Network launches a Confidential Clinic for Teens

Submitted by Jordan Hiltunen, Wood Buffalo Primary Care Network

Lampshade... Coffeebean... Backpack...

Not just a list of random inanimate objects: at the Wood Buffalo Primary Care Network’s (WBPCN) Teen Sexual Health Clinic, words like these are patient identifiers.

“The Teen Clinic is a completely anonymous service,” RN Sarah Hore explains, “we don’t collect names or personal health numbers; we only ask that patients provide us with a nickname which we can attach to their records.” The unorthodox policy is working: in the past few months, clinic receptionists have been bombarded with a steady influx of creative pseudonyms, suggesting that the WBPCN’s dedication to patient privacy has been well received by the youth of Fort McMurray. “Sexual health can be a very sensitive subject; the thought of accessing these types of resources can be very intimidating to teens. We go to great lengths to promote the clinic as a safe space that will provide nonjudgmental care and support.”

The Teen Sexual Health Clinic – made possible by the Local 488 United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters through their support of the Northern Lights Health Foundation – was launched in January of 2014 and operates in accordance with the harm reduction model of public health: the program is neither pro-abstinence nor pro-sex, but rather pro-health. Every Monday and Wednesday, teens can drop in after school for sexual health counseling, free prophylactics, birth control prescriptions, and STI and pregnancy testing. A registered nurse and a pharmacist provide patient care under the guidance of the program’s physician lead, Dr. Chaudry.

“Every aspect of the program is carefully tailored to fit the needs of the population,” stresses Lori Apostol, WBPCN Executive Director. “The clinic operates out of two different locations in town to provide ready access for youth who may not have access to transportation. This program has truly been a community endeavour, molded into its current form by our member physicians, our supporters in the schools, and of course, local parents and teens.”

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Making the connections on mental health
Patient finds support and resources

Submitted by Carly Strong, Edmonton North Primary Care Network

The mental well-being of patients is a high priority for physicians and staff at the Edmonton North Primary Care Network (PCN). “We really try to focus on getting the patient the appropriate care at the right time,” says Roslyn O’Neill, Patient Care Manager.

The PCN has implemented a Mental Health Triage process that has all patients complete a phone assessment with one of the PCN’s Mental Health Practitioners, who then directs them to the appropriate place for services, whether that is the PCN or other community services.

When Judy talked to her family doctor, Dr. Boris Boyko, about getting some help with the years of emotional, mental and financial abuse she was experiencing, he referred her to the Mental Health Program. She met with David Campkin, a Mental Health Practitioner, and after a few sessions Judy found the spirit and power within herself to part ways with her husband and start rebuilding her life.

When Judy first met David, she shared her experiences that brought her to the point of asking for help. “My ex-husband liked to humiliate me. He thought he was teaching me a lesson. In one of the last incidents, I had fallen asleep in a chair, and he took a picture of me and showed his girlfriend. He put me up against a wall and screamed in my face, telling me I was a slob.” That was the final straw for Judy and she knew something had to change.

After a few one-on-one appointments with David, she learned she had options in how to deal with the abuse she was experiencing, even though it wasn’t until she talked about her situation out loud that she realized what she was enduring was abuse. Meeting with David allowed her to work though her options and decided she needed to leave the marriage.

Her life has changed since meeting with David. “I filed for divorce, left home and went to stay at Sage (a women’s shelter in Edmonton). I was at the shelter for two months, and now have an apartment of my own. I have such respect and gratitude for David, my Mental Health Practitioner. Without him, I would not be where I am today, in a secure and peaceful place. I have less anxiety. I don’t fear every move I make. I don’t fear what I do, what I choose to eat, when I get up, when I go to bed; I am no longer terrified of my ex-husband’s anger and judgments. I am at peace with myself. I am in touch with, and get visits from, my children and from my sister.”

When asked about what advice Judy would give to those who are thinking about asking for help she said, “Go for it. There is nothing the PCN won’t do for you. You will never regret going. Just go for it.”

If you would like more information about the programs and services of the Edmonton North Primary Care Network please visit www.enpcn.com.

Confidential Clinic for Teens (continued)

The clinic’s patient-centered approach even extends to the WBPCN’s communication strategies. Teens are welcome to contact the clinic over email, on Facebook, or even over the phone. “I carry a clinic cell,” enthuses Hore, “patients are free to text their questions or concerns before they visit. Communicating with them on their terms does a lot to bring them through our doors.”

When asked about the strangest nickname a patient has selected, Hore laughs, but politely dismisses the question as inconsequential. “They might arrive as Megatron, Hermione, or Taco… but they leave informed, safe, and healthy.”

To learn more about the WBPCN Teen Sexual Health Clinic, visit www.wbpcn.ca/services/teensexualhealth