

Psychiatrist shortage Q&A

I've heard Dr. Hanna is retiring. How is it possible for CCH not to have any psychiatrists?

After 17 years of dedicated service to the hospital and our patients, Dr. Hanna is retiring from the hospital's inpatient/outpatient Mental Health Unit (formerly known as the inpatient/outpatient Psychiatry Unit); however, she will still provide support for community programs, including the Assertive Community Treatment Team and First Episode Psychosis, housed at the Community Addiction and Mental Health Centre.

Our inpatient/outpatient hospital services will still provide patients with access to psychiatric care on a daily basis thanks to the support of part time psychiatrists (called locums).

As mandated by the Ontario Mental Health Act, CCH is the only hospital outside of Ottawa (across SDG and Prescott-Russell) designated as a "schedule 1" facility, able to care for these severely mentally ill patients.

What does it mean that Dr. Hanna is supporting community programs? What type of patients will still have her care?

Dr. Hanna will continue to work with CCH's community programs, supporting patients experiencing severe mental illness such as schizophrenia, psychosis, bipolar disorder and major depressive disorder. Dr. Hanna's compassionate care will help our most vulnerable patients to avoid frequent hospitalization/readmission and help them retain quality of life that could otherwise rapidly deteriorate.

What is the hospital doing to bring new psychiatrists to Cornwall?

We are actively recruiting new psychiatrists to permanently join our CCH team, casting a wide net using all available resources including:

- HealthForce Ontario, the Ministry of Health's recruitment agency for health practitioners
- University recruitment opportunities
- Regional hospital partners in Ottawa

A broad range of candidates (including foreign graduates) will be considered to meet our local needs amidst the current severe provincial shortage of psychiatrists, as recently highlighted by the Ontario Psychiatric Association and Section on Psychiatry of the Ontario Medical Association (August, 2018)

[Link to the report here for more information](#)

Why is there a shortage of psychiatrists? Is this a Cornwall issue?

According to a report by the Ontario Psychiatric Association and the section on Psychiatry of the Ontario Medical Association, the shortage is caused by several issues including:

- 1) The majority of Canadian Psychiatrists are approaching retirement age
- 2) There continues to be an increased demand for psychiatric support in Ontario

- 20% increase in number of outpatients seen by psychiatrists (2003-2013)
 - 53% increase in Emergency Department visits related to mental health (1996-2010)
 - 25% increase in youth visits to doctors with regards to mental health
- 3) Better incentives are required to encourage new psychiatrists to enter the field and serve communities outside urban centres

The psychiatric shortage is currently affecting all areas of our province and is not unique to Cornwall. While the challenges we face in Cornwall are being experienced at urban and community hospitals alike, we will continue caring for local patients thanks to locum psychiatrists at our hospital while we search for permanent solutions.

What happens if recruitment is not successful or it takes a long time to get back to a full complement of psychiatrists? Is there a different model of care being explored?

We are exploring other options which include support from psychiatrists that are working at hospitals in Ottawa, by using technology to gain access to psychiatrists through telemedicine or utilizing, family physicians are successfully used elsewhere in Ontario, with the support of psychiatrists to run inpatient mental health units. We are very hopeful that we will have a solution that may involve using innovations and efficient use of resources, including psychiatrists.