

Central Local Health Integration Network

Central LHIN improves access to opioid treatment programs

585 residents in Central LHIN received treatment for opioid addictions in 2012/13

February 10, 2014 – “I look like any other person, but I have been hiding an opiate addiction for six years,” explains Lesley, a client that has benefited from support services that are being provided to help people seeking treatment for opioid addictions across Central LHIN.

Lesley’s addiction started after suffering from serious chronic back pain – pain that was managed with prescription opioids. Lesley tried to come off the opioids many times on her own finding the effects of withdrawal to be agonizing and intolerable. As the addiction progressed for Lesley, “Every facet of my life was negatively affected. My marriage suffered. My relationship with my kids and extended family suffered. I wasn’t performing as well as I could at my job. I stopped taking pride in my physical appearance and had very little motivation. I lost interest in hobbies and favourite activities,” she says.

Improving access to treatment for patients like Lesley was part of a \$2 million investment in 2013 by the Central LHIN to expand access to both community opioid addiction treatment as well as services for pregnant and parenting women with substance use conditions – with a priority on addiction to opioids. Both Addiction Services for York Region (ASYR) and Black Creek Community Health Centre received funding from the LHIN to implement programs to improve health outcomes and reduce the social and economic costs related to opioid use.



According to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, treatment for prescription opioids is the fastest growing problem seen in addiction services in Ontario. Fortunately, Lesley’s life has changed since learning about the programs offered in Central LHIN. With the help of Addiction Services for York Region, Lesley developed a plan for recovery. She speaks of the understanding, compassion, respect and dignity she received throughout her treatment and the impact Suboxone – used to treat opioid addiction – has had. “I got my life back!” she exclaims, and she no longer worries about going into withdrawal. “I know that with the continued help, support and guidance of ASYR, I will conquer my addiction and lead a productive, happy and healthy life.”

“Central LHIN expanded both the community opioid addiction treatment programs to remove some of the barriers that exist and to support and guide people like Lesley. Improving health outcomes, quality of life, and reducing the social and economic costs related to opioid use are key objectives of these initiatives in our communities,” explains Kim Baker, Chief Executive Officer at the Central LHIN.

As described by Lesley, addiction to opioids is prevalent, complex and often all-encompassing. Mental illness and substance use also have an added layer of complexity – stigma – which prevents many from seeking help or talking about their illness, so these investments are critically important for people struggling with an addiction. As Lesley explains, “If someone develops diabetes because of a genetic disposition and poor lifestyle choices, no one blames them. But if a person develops an addiction because of the same reasons, they are blamed.”

Executive Director Richard Solomon of ASYR explains how his agency is using the funding to assist individuals and families struggling with opioid dependency gain control over their lives, “A holistic individualized plan is developed in partnership with the client that focuses on physical, social and psychological well-being. Treatment options include opioid replacement, counselling, group programs, alternative treatments and case management which are offered at six sites within the Central LHIN. Preserving individual dignity and providing hope is paramount.”

Learn More:

- [Addiction Services for York Region](#) was funded to establish a community satellite model of care for a community opioid treatment clinic. Through six satellite sites across the Central LHIN, methadone maintenance treatment and counselling/case management and support services are being provided for people living with opioid addiction. Patients have access to a full range of addiction services including:

assessment, treatment planning, case management, therapy, referrals, and treatment reviews. All satellite sites provide culturally sensitive services, including those targeted to the Aboriginal population living both on and off-reserve.

- [Black Creek Community Health Centre](#) is the second program that received funding to establish outreach and day treatment services to create a continuum of services for pregnant and parenting women living with substance use issues. The program is twofold:
 - **Bridges for Moms** is an outreach service that is modeled after the Pathways to Healthy Families program at the Jean Tweed Centre. Bridges for Moms works in a holistic and culturally responsive manner to reduce harm to pregnant and parenting women who use substances and their young children living in North York, Northern York Region and South Simcoe. Services provided will include: assessment and referral, information, counseling, assistance with child welfare issues, parenting programs, child development services and community services offering training, education and consultation on the issues of substance use, pregnancy and parenting. ASYR offers a similar program – [Umbrellas](#) – across York Region.
 - **Mom and Kids Too (MK2)** is a substance use day treatment program for pregnant and parenting women, and their children ages six and under. MK2 is a mobile service that will be offered three days a week, for a seven week period in multiple sites across the Central LHIN, four to five times a year. It starts later and ends earlier than most day programs and includes participation in small groups with other mothers focusing on effective parenting, attachment activities and addictions treatment. Child care is also available onsite.

[CAMH: Do you know...Prescription Opioids](#)

- Opioids are a family of drugs that have morphine-like effects. The primary medical use for prescription opioids is to relieve pain. Other medical uses include control of coughs and diarrhea, and the treatment of addiction to other opioids. Opioids can also produce euphoria, making them prone to abuse. Some people use opioids for their ability to produce a mellow, relaxed “high.”
- Addiction is when a drug becomes central to a person’s thoughts, emotions and activities, and he or she feels a craving or compulsion to continue using the drug. This may or may not include physical dependence.

According to [The Way Forward: Stewardship for Prescription Narcotics in Ontario](#):

- Ontario has the highest rate of prescription narcotic use in Canada. In fact, the province’s rate is two to four times higher than in any other province. Prescription narcotics are increasingly recognized as one of the primary forms of illicit drug use – even over heroin and other street drugs.
- Between 1991 and 2009, prescriptions for oxycodone-containing products rose by 900 per cent.

According to [First Do No Harm: Responding to Canada’s Prescription Drug Crisis](#):

- Canada is the second-largest per capita consumer of prescription opioids (International Narcotics Control Board, 2013).
- The Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario reports that opioid-related deaths nearly tripled over an eight-year period, from 168 in 2002 to 494 in 2010.

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