



CANADIAN COALITION FOR SENIORS' MENTAL HEALTH

To promote seniors' mental health by connecting people, ideas and resources

COALITION CANADIENNE POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES

Promouvoir la santé mentale des personnes âgées en reliant les personnes, les idées et les ressources

National Guidelines for Seniors' Mental Health Project: Executive Summary

Key Messages

- Mental illness is not a normal consequence of aging and can be prevented, treated and managed.
- The Guidelines for Seniors' Mental Health have been developed to address knowledge gaps and to provide an evidence-based approach to the prevention, assessment, treatment and management of mental health problems in seniors.
- A comprehensive consultative process resulted in four areas in seniors' mental health – depression, delirium, suicide and mental health issues in long term care homes – being identified as priority areas for Guideline development.
- The CCSMH led the creation of Canada's first evidence-based Guidelines for seniors' mental health, in collaboration with four multi-disciplinary teams of recognized experts from across the country.
- Application of the Guidelines in practice and policy by physicians, health care practitioners, administrators and policy makers is imperative to ensure improved mental health outcomes for seniors.
- The CCSMH is committed to the dissemination and use of the Guidelines for the care of seniors' mental health in Canada.

Background Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health (CCSMH)

The CCSMH was established in April of 2002, in response to concerns raised by healthcare professionals and government representatives over inadequate awareness of seniors' mental health and the quality of care provided to people over age 65. The mission of the CCSMH is *to promote the mental health of seniors by connecting people, ideas and resources*. The primary goals of the CCSMH include:

- To ensure that Seniors' Mental Health is recognized as a key Canadian health and wellness issue
- To facilitate the development, dissemination and promotion of initiatives and resources related to seniors' mental health
- To ensure growth and sustainability of the CCSMH

A truly national organization, CCSMH has over 750 individual members and 85 institutional representatives from health and seniors organizations coast-to-coast. More information on the CCSMH can be found on its website www.ccsmh.ca.

Overview of Project

In January 2005, the CCSMH was awarded funding by Health Canada, Population Health Fund, to lead and facilitate the development of evidence-based recommendations for best-practice National Guidelines in four key areas of seniors' mental health. These include:

- The Assessment and Treatment of Delirium
- The Assessment and Treatment of Depression
- The Assessment of Suicide Risk and Prevention of Suicide
- The Assessment and Treatment of Mental Health Issues in Long Term Care Homes (Focus on Mood and Behaviour Symptoms)

Project Goal: The goal of the project was to lead and facilitate the development of evidence-based recommendations for best-practice guidelines in key areas of seniors' mental health.

Project Objectives:

1. To identify existing best-practice guidelines in the area of seniors' mental health both within Canada and internationally.
2. To facilitate the collaboration of key leaders within the realm of seniors' mental health in order to review existing guidelines related to seniors' mental health.
3. To facilitate a process of partnership where key leaders and identified stakeholders will create a set of recommendations and/or guidelines for identified areas within seniors' mental health.
4. To disseminate recommendations and/or guidelines to identified stakeholders and at the CCSMH Best Practices Conference 2005 in order to create an opportunity for review, analysis and consensus for moving forward with the recommendations and/or guidelines.
5. To recommend the guidelines to the Public Health Agency of Canada and disseminate to identified stakeholders.

In order to fulfill the mandate of the project, four workgroups made up of multidisciplinary experts from across the country were formed. Over the past year, the workgroups identified and evaluated existing guidelines, reviewed primary literature and formulated new draft documents with recommendations and rationale. Recommendations were disseminated to multiple stakeholders for input and then revised accordingly. The completed documents contain comprehensive text and recommendations focused on prevention, assessment, treatment, management, education and systems related issues.

Guideline Dissemination

The CCSMH has now turned its attention to the task of disseminating the documents. In order to maximize the benefits of the *National Guidelines*, the following groups are considered key targets:

- CCSMH members & Steering Committee
- Physicians and health care practitioners
- Administrators and planners at health care organizations/service providers
- Policy makers, government departments
- Professional bodies and communities
- Universities, colleges, and training programs
- Caregivers, families, general public

Dissemination of the *National Guidelines* will begin in May 2006 and is scheduled to continue for a 12 month period. Distribution will take place over a number of communications formats and methods, including electronic and printed distribution. To support the Dissemination and Implementation Phase of the project, the CCSMH has formed the Dissemination and Knowledge Exchange Team. This group of experts will support the creation and execution of presentations, workshops, supplements, journal articles and user-friendly toolkits.

Conclusion

Mental illness is not a normal consequence of aging. All seniors have the right and deserve to receive services and care that promotes their mental health and responds to their mental illness needs. In the last four years, the CCSMH has become an important catalyst in a growing movement to more effectively respond to the mental healthcare needs of Canada's rapidly expanding seniors' population. Use of the guidelines by physicians, health care practitioners, administrators and policy makers will ensure that evidence based knowledge is transferred into the care of seniors with mental health and illness issues