

Family Connections

EDITED BY JUSTUN MILLER

AUGUST 2015

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

| | |
|--|---|
| Vancouver Adult Mental Health Intake (VAMHI) | 2 |
| Family Support Groups | 3 |
| Strengthening Families Together | 4 |
| Chinese Family Support Group | 5 |
| -St. Paul's Hospital Family Support Group | 6 |
| -Access Central | |
| -From Grief to Action | |
| Withdrawal Management | 7 |
| Calendar of Events | 8 |

The Family Connections Newsletter is a monthly resource provided by the Family Support and Involvement Team at Vancouver Coastal Health to inform families and friends of loved ones living with mental health and/or substance use issues of resources and up to date information for themselves and family.



You can receive the Family Connections newsletter via

The *Family Connections* newsletter is available electronically, direct to your email inbox each month. If you don't already receive *Family Connections* via email and would like to stay up-to-date about programs and services supporting families with a loved one with mental illness and/or addiction, sign up for our Consumer & Family e-distribution list. Visit www.spotlightonmentalhealth.com

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Then, scroll down to the bottom of the page, enter your email address and choose the type of information you would like to receive. You will receive an email confirming you have been added to the list.

Join the Consumer & Family E-list * indicates required

Email Address: *

First Name:

Last Name:

What type of info would you like?

Consumer focused information

Family focused information

Both Consumer and Family focused information

Email Format

html

text



“Supporting people in achieving as much independence as possible”

Vancouver Coastal Health is always striving to provide the best care, and promote better health for the community which is not only innovative, but also sustainable. One of the many ways in which this commitment can be seen is through the mental health and addictions central intake team VAMHI (Vancouver Adult Mental Health Intake).

Vancouver Adult Mental Health Intake

Vancouver Adult Mental Health Intake (VAMHI) is central access for various community based Vancouver Coastal Health mental health programs for residents of Vancouver.

VAMHI refers directly to Mental Health & Addiction teams, Vancouver Hospital Outpatient team, and the Acute Home Base Treatment program.

At VAMHI we offer short term follow-up for a 3-month period for people who present with a psychotic illness. This includes consults and diagnostic clarification but also case management and psychiatric treatment for mental health and addiction clients with no fixed address. VAMHI also provides resource information for services we are unable to make direct referrals to.

Mental Health and Addiction Teams provide intensive and specialized long-term treatment & rehabilitation services for clients with needs that require both treatment and case management to achieve self-defined goals. The teams support complex, vulnerable, and marginalized persons with psychotic illness, mood &/or personality disorders with or without addiction issues that require interdisciplinary services to achieve and maintain functional stability. This includes people with addictions and mood disorders that previously may not have been accepted at the mental health teams.

The Vancouver Hospital Outpatient Program provides treatment in group modules following a psychiatric assessment. The four main streams of service are depression, anxiety, wellness (personality disorders), and concurrent disorders.

Acute Home Base Treatment follows the philosophy that home is best and provides one to three weeks of psychiatric care in the home setting by a nurse and psychiatrist. This service is meant to be an alternative to being admitted to hospital; health care professionals are required to make these referrals. Many people are seen through this program once discharged from hospital. People return to support services within the community that best fit their needs at discharge.

As a whole, community mental health values supporting people in achieving as much independence as possible, which includes moving from more specialized, intense services to the use of natural supports and primary care resources when ready. At the same time, VAMHI strives to improve access to mental health services and streamline the referral process in order to provide fair and equitable access for all residents of Vancouver. We continue to work to make it easier for clients, families and referral agents, including family practitioners and other Mental Health and Addiction service providers, to access mental health services.

Tel: 604.675.3997

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Drop-in: 9:00 - 4:30 Monday to Friday

Robert and Lily Lee
Family Community Health Centre
3rd Floor-1669 East Broadway
Vancouver, BC V5N 1V9

Written by Sarbi Aujla, Senior Mental Health Worker @ VAMHI

Vancouver has a large selection of supports and services in the community for the families and loved ones of those struggling with mental health and substance use issues. The next few pages will feature a few of the fantastic family support services available for the families of those struggling with mental health and substance use issues. A calendar at the back of the newsletter provides dates and times for even more support groups.

Family Support Groups

For the last 18 months, I've had the pleasure of facilitating the Raven Song family group, which ran once a month and was done in partnership with the BC Schizophrenia Society. Good news – The BCSS now has funding to run this group by itself. I have stepped back; we are planning a new family support group right at the VGH campus starting in the fall. Stay tuned on this one! In the meantime, I would like to share with you a few of the highlights of the Raven Song support group.

When I started working with this group, one of the things that struck me right away was the expressed wish that this group should have a family like feeling. And indeed, that was the case, at least from my perspective. New members were greeted with enthusiasm, and there was always a bit of a special place for them. That's needed! People who go to their first support group frequently spend quite a bit of time wondering whether it's really necessary, what people they might find there, will the topics be of interest, will it all be worthwhile? The courage that is often required to make the decision to attend needs to be rewarded!

We ended up having a bit of a rhythm. We'd start off by briefly going over what the group was all about. This was followed by a round of introductions where people might also mention what brought them to the group in the first place. They would end their introduction by replying to focusing questions such as, "How do you feel supported?" These introductions would often last for quite a while, perhaps resulting in some conversations among group members. After a break that allowed people to mingle and get to know each other, we would go on to the educational part of the group and discuss things like exercise and mental health. The end would be marked by a short go-around about what we took from the meeting. Two or three weeks after the group, I would end a quick email to participants to say hello, share some resources and remind people that we are there to support them.

We encouraged participants to lead at least parts of the group. One selected group member might spend a bit of time describing their journey with their loved one, emphasizing what worked for them in the path towards recovery. That same or a different member sometimes led the educational part of the evening, or I would make sure to shape the educational part according to that member's focus. For example, one member had an interesting story about how she defined success. Then we talked some more about how we can define success, not according to traditional ideas about money and status but according to what we saw as success. (E.g. "I don't fight with my loved one about money anymore") The image here is one of the images we shared to emphasize different ideas about success.

We are looking forward to the continued success of the Raven Song group and the success of the new groups (yes, there might just be two!) on the VGH campus.



“New members were greeted with enthusiasm, and there was always a bit of a special place for them. That’s needed!”

Written by Isabella Mori, Family Support and Involvement Coordinator



Do you have a relative or friend with a serious mental illness?

Would you like to learn more about his or her illness?

Strengthening Families Together; a 9-session group for families and friends will provide information, skill-building, and support.

You will learn about:

- ◇ The different types of mental illness
- ◇ The medications and treatments for mental illness
- ◇ How to cope with and support your loved one living with a mental illness

BC Schizophrenia Society

Tuesdays, Start date September 15
1200 West 73 Ave.,

Registration is required
Email Sally at community@bcss.org

Or

Phone Sally at 604-270-7841

Chinese Family Support Group

Pathways Clubhouse

Richmond Chinese Family Support Group

Pathways Clubhouse is a psychiatric rehabilitation program for individuals living with mental illnesses to regain employment, housing, education, social relationships and a meaningful life. Besides the exciting employment program, housing program, the fun social program, subsidized meal program, youth and young adult program, one of the community programs that is worth mentioning is the Richmond Chinese Family Support Group (中文愛心互助小組).

Background Story

Over 15 years ago, there was a small group of family members whose loved ones were dealing with mental health challenges. They felt lost and lonely in the long journey of fighting with mental illness. It was like a traveler walking in a dark tunnel, not knowing where the exit is. They also felt helpless in handling issues that came with the illness, such as education, housing and employment. There was not much they could do to change their loved one's circumstances. Although there were some support groups available in English, it was not enough for them to express their deepest feelings. In order to provide support to each other, they came together and formed a Chinese Family Support Group where they could share their journeys of dealing with mental health challenges together in their mother tongue.

As the membership grew larger and larger, the little family home was no longer able to have everyone joining the group. In 2005, with the financial support from SMART fund, Pathways Clubhouse had the honor to run it as a community program, to continue to provide support to those who speak Chinese.

Today's Story

The Richmond Chinese Family Support Group (中文愛心互助小組) usually meets on every 2nd Saturday of the month at the Richmond Caring Place (烈治文加愛中心) from 1:00pm-2:30pm. After the support group, there is a guest speaker invited to give us a free seminar (免費精神健康講座) on mental health related topics that usually runs from 2:30pm-4:00pm.

Various mental health professionals or community workers were invited to be a guest speaker during the 2nd part of the event. There are topics given in the following areas:

A specific type of mental illness (e.g., schizophrenia, anxiety and depression, BPD, eating disorder)

A type of treatment to mental illness (e.g., DBT, CBT, Play Therapy, mindfulness, psychopharmacology, nutrition management, etc.)

Community mental health services (e.g., community programs, mental health team, navigation of the mental health system)

Panel discussion (e.g., family member or personal story sharing, video sharing)

Today, the support group participants are mostly Chinese speaking family members with a loved one who is dealing with mental health issues; however, there are also the individuals dealing with mental illnesses, their friends or other mental health professionals attending these monthly workshops and support group events. The workshops and support groups are delivered in Cantonese and/or Mandarin (國/粵語互助小組), which provides them with a platform to share mental health related information in their mother tongue. Feel free to check out <http://pathchinese.wordpress.com>

We welcome your input on topics that you would like to hear or which guest speaker you would like to invite. We would really appreciate if you would like to become a guest speaker and speak to our group to share any mental health related information/knowledge.

Bessie Wang | Chinese Program Coordinator

Pathways Clubhouse

Tel: 604-276-8834 ext. 12 | Cell. 604-961-3381

E-mail: Bessie.Wang@pathwaysclubhouse.com

“They felt lost and lonely in the long journey of fighting with mental illness. It was like a traveler walking in a dark tunnel, not knowing where the exit is. They also felt helpless in handling issues that came with the illness, such as education, housing and employment.”

“It is an open group so participants set the agenda and give us ideas for future sessions.”

i'm not telling you it is going to be easy, i'm telling you it's going to be worth it.



St. Paul's Hospital Family Support Group

The St. Paul's Family Support Group is a support group for family and friends who have a loved one with a mental illness. It is an open group so participants set the agenda and give us ideas for future sessions.

Sometimes we talk about how the last month has gone for participants and sometimes participants share different resources and strategies for supporting their loved one and for supporting themselves.

Sometimes we arrange for speakers who have specific knowledge to come and speak to the group on topics that interest them. It really depends on what the group needs.

We meet on the last Thursday of each month from 6:00 – 7:30 in room 2B-169 at St. Paul's Hospital, 1081 Burrard Street.

The group is facilitated by social workers and occasionally a nurse. All of the facilitators work in the Mental Health

program at St. Paul's Hospital.

It is an open group so people can join at any time. It is important to connect with Kaye or Gwyneth before attending to make sure that this group will be a good fit. For more information and to register please call Kaye Robinson at 604-682-2344 ext. 68964 or Gwyneth Jones at 604-682-2344 ext. 62403.

Access Central (Addiction Services)

For those with a loved one experiencing substance use issues a great resource is:

Access Central (1.866.658.1221)

Access Central is the centralized intake point for many addiction services at Vancouver Coastal Health. Families are welcome to call Access Central to find out more information about services that may be available for their loved one.

From Grief to Action

From Grief to Action is a volunteer-based not-for-profit association in British Columbia. They are a voice and a support network for families and friends affected by drug use. FGTA developed and published The Coping Kit for families. Available for free on their website, this toolkit offers practical advice and information for families who are supporting someone living with addiction.

Topics addressed in the book include:

- Information about addiction
- Reliable information on drugs including risks, harm reduction, signs of overdose and withdrawal
- Communicating as a family
- Addiction treatment and support resource information
- How to find help
- Information about recovery

If you would like to receive a copy of this free resource, visit www.fgta.ca

Withdrawal Management Services at Vancouver Coastal Health

What is withdrawal management?

Withdrawal management services provide support to people experiencing physiological and psychological symptoms after discontinuing use of drugs and/or alcohol. At Vancouver Coastal Health these services include Detox, Daytox and the Sobering Unit. Detox is a medically-managed 26 bed unit staffed by nurses, physicians, a psychiatrist, social workers, counsellors and detox support workers. Individuals tend to stay at Detox for approximately 5-7 days. Daytox is a day-program that offers a range of ongoing programs including, but not limited to: check-in groups; individual and group counselling; acupuncture; medication; and relapse prevention. Individuals can access Detox and Daytox by calling Access Central at 1-866-658-1221.

Individuals who are intoxicated and are behaving in a way that is unsafe in the community may be brought to the Sobering Unit by VPD or by Saferide for brief medical monitoring while they withdraw from a substance. All withdrawal management services are open to individuals who may be experiencing concurrent disorders (a combination of mental health and substance use problems).

What can families do to help someone experiencing withdrawal?

Sri emphasizes, “The most helpful things families can do is to become educated, becoming knowledgeable about what their loved one is experiencing as well as services that are available to help”. A great resource is Access Central – which is the centralized intake point for many addiction services at Vancouver Coastal Health, including Detox. Families are welcome to call Access Central to find out more information about services that may be available for their loved one. Sri also suggests that it can be helpful for families to support their loved ones by visiting them while they are staying at the Detox Unit. Sri emphasizes, “Detox has visiting hours daily and family and other supportive people are very welcome to come and spend time with their loved one”.

What can families do if their loved one is experiencing a crisis related to withdrawal?

The symptoms of withdrawal can be overwhelming. If your family member is having a seizure, experiencing chest pains, becomes unconscious or is behaving bizarrely dial 911. It may be necessary for someone

to receive medical attention during withdrawal. Families can also call Access Central (1-866-658-1221) for assistance connecting someone to withdrawal management services. It’s important to know that staff at Access Central will also need to speak to the individual who is withdrawing.

What do families find most challenging about withdrawal management?

Sri says, “Withdrawal can be a really difficult time for families because they are struggling with the unknown, they want to know ‘is my loved one ok?’” He also emphasizes how difficult it can be to watch someone experience the symptoms of withdrawal. Sri suggests that it can be helpful for families to connect with resources that provide support to families who have a loved one struggling with addiction or concurrent illnesses. In Vancouver, organizations like From Grief to Action and support groups like Parents Forever can be excellent resources.

For more information on Withdrawal Management services at Vancouver Coastal Health, please call Access Central at 1-866-658-1221.

“Withdrawal can be a really difficult time for families because they are struggling with the unknown, they want to know ‘is my loved one ok?’”

Calendar of Events

August 2015

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|-------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| | | | | SMART | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 SMART | 5 VCH | 6 GRASP SMART | 7 Parents Forever | 8 Pathways |
| 9 | 10 MDABC | 11 MDABC SMART | 12 Raven Song | 13 SMART | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 SMART | 19 | 20 SMART | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 MDABC SMART | 26 | 27 SPH SMART | 28 Parents Forever | 29 |

Family Support Groups

Mood Disorders Association of BC (MDABC) – Mutual support groups for families of individuals living with a mood disorder. 2nd and 4th Tuesday each month, 7 - 9 p.m., Mount St. Joseph Hospital, 3080 Prince Edward St, Harvest Room A. 2nd Monday of each month, 6:30-8:30pm at Evergreen Community Health Centre (3425 Crowley). Contact 604-873-0103

Raven Song Family Support Group– Support group for families who have a loved one living with mental illness. 2nd Wednesday of each month 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at Raven Song Community Health Centre, 2450 Ontario Street, Vancouver. Contact 604-290-3817 or isabella.mori@vch.ca

SPH Family Support Group- Support for families who have a loved one living with mental illness. Last Thursday of each month, 6-7:30pm. St Paul’s Hospital, 1081 Burrard Street, Room 2B-169, 2nd floor, Burrard Building. To register, call Kaye 604-682-2344 local 68964

VCH Eating Disorder Program – Family Support Group – for friends and family members of individuals living with an eating disorder. 1st Wednesday of each month, 6 – 7:30 p.m., 3rd Floor, 2750 East Hastings, Vancouver. Contact Hella at 604-675-2531 ext 20689.

Parents Forever – Support group for families of adult children living with addiction. Group meets every 2nd Friday at St. Mary’s Kerrisdale, 2490 W 37th Ave., Vancouver. Contact Frances Kenny, 604-524-4230 or fkenny@uniserve.com

Pathways Clubhouse Chinese Family Support Group – Education sessions for Chinese families who have a loved one living with mental illness. 2nd Saturday of each month. , 1 – 4:00 p.m., Room 345/50, 7000 Minoru Blvd, Richmond. Contact bessie.wang@cmha.bc.ca or 604-276-8834, ext 12.

GRASP Support Group – GRASP offers peer-led mutual support groups for families or individuals who have had a loved one die as a result of substance abuse or addiction. 2nd Thursday of each month, 7-9 p.m. at Gilmore Community School 50 South Gilmore Ave, Rm 207. Please email graspvancouver@gmail.com to register.

SMART, Family and Friends - Support group for family and friends to learn and implement self care, boundary setting, and compassionate communication tools. Every Tuesday 6:30-7:30PM. Every other Friday 6:30-7:30 at Three Bridges Addictions 1290 Hornby Street, Rm 310. Call Oona @ 604-714-3480. Thursday 6:00-7:00PM at Raven Song 2450 Ontario Street, 1st floor. 604-872-8441.