



Collectif pour l'accès à la psychothérapie
Coalition for Access to Psychotherapy

Press release

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Quebecers need help

Hundreds of thousands of lives disrupted every year by mental disorders

Increased access to psychotherapy services now more imperative than ever

MONTREAL, April 9, 2015 – Among the challenges facing Quebec today is the relatively unnoticed but very real issue of hundreds of thousands of lives disrupted by common mental disorders and their impact, adding a tremendous burden on our public finances. An effective response, however, is possible through the approach recommended by the Coalition for Access to Psychotherapy (CAP), whose mission is to educate the public in Quebec about the problem and the need for collective action and appropriate, effective solutions.

In a statement intended as a call for action, the CAP recently forwarded a brief entitled *Better access to psychotherapy services through insured services*, its latest statement on this issue, to the Quebec Minister of Health and Social Services, Dr. Gaétan Barrette.

“The facts and figures make an overwhelming case for mounting a collective effort to deal with the problem of mental disorders – an approach that’s all the more realistic in that effective solutions along these lines already exist and have proved their worth,” said CAP co-spokesperson Michael Sheehan. “This is the reason we’ve invited Dr. Barrette to join the discussion and share ideas on this topic. We believe it’s time for Quebec to make the right choice and implement a well-organized intervention strategy, based specifically on increased access to psychotherapy services.”

Mental disorders are everyone’s concern

Nearly one Quebecer in five suffers from some form of mental disorder. Common disorders such as anxiety and depression affect more than 1 million Quebecers 12 or older. Even more alarming is the fact that 75% of mental health problems appear before the age of 25 and are the number one cause of hospitalization among people 14 to 25.¹

This situation is also of concern among adults. The incidence of common mental disorders such as anxiety, mood disorders and depression is over 12% among those 25 to 64,

¹Coalition for Access to Psychotherapy, *Better access to psychotherapy services through insured services: Brief presented to the Minister of Health and Social Services of Quebec* (2015). Figures cited in this news release are taken from this brief.

affecting over 430,000 Quebec adults every year. These problems have major repercussions in the labour market, where 30% to 50% of long-term absenteeism (more than 6 months) is attributable to common mental disorders.

A major financial burden

The lack of access to psychotherapy services is creating a major financial burden for Quebecers.

It is estimated that disability allowances paid to those 15 or older in the labour market as a result of common mental disorders represent between 30% and 40% of all salary insurance and disability claims.

“These figures lead us to believe that prompt access to psychological treatment could have a significant beneficial medium- to long-term impact,” said CAP’s other co-spokesperson, David Levine, who also points to a Canadian Psychological Association report which shows that nearly 30% of the absenteeism costs related to common mental disorders could be recovered if workers had better access to psychological services.²

A tested solution that could be promptly applied

A solution exists that has already been implemented successfully in other countries. As the CAP brief points out, numerous studies confirm that psychotherapy can also be effective and costs less than medication in treating common mental disorders. It also helps reduce the cost to the healthcare system because those receiving treatment reduce their consumption of other healthcare services, such as emergency care, hospitalization and medications.

Programmes in England and Australia have also shown that cost savings to the healthcare system and other government programs are greater than the investment required to make psychotherapy services more readily available.

A collective commitment

CAP urges government authorities to create and implement a program for increased access to psychotherapy services, and to introduce insured services based on collaborative care models (now the standard clinical practice). CAP also considers it desirable that the professional bodies concerned, including the Quebec College of Physicians, the College of Family Physicians of Canada, the Ordre des psychologues du Québec, and the National Institute for Excellence in Health and Social Services (INESSS), establish a framework and guidelines based on collaborative care models for such services.

“Quebec must recognize the numerous adverse effects on individuals and communities alike when psychotherapy services are unavailable, and must commit to a strategy for increased access. Implementation of such a strategy is more than justified because, in addition to allowing us to deliver better quality of life for those affected and make

² Health Intelligence Inc., *An Imperative for Change: Access to Psychological Services for Canada. A Report to the Canadian Psychological Association* (March 2013).

substantial savings collectively, our healthcare network has resources that would enable us to ensure the availability of these services in short order,” said CAP co-spokesperson Michael Sheehan.

About the Coalition for Access to Psychotherapy

The Coalition for Access to Psychotherapy (CAP) was created in 2013 by the Graham Boeckh Foundation and the Mental Illness Foundation in order to play an active role in applying the recommendations based on the Quebec Health and Welfare Commissioner’s assessment of mental health services with respect to access to psychotherapy. In keeping with the objectives of both foundations – to prevent mental illness, improve mental healthcare and services and alleviate the suffering of people living with mental illness and their families – CAP believes that psychotherapy services should be included among the treatments available under the Quebec public healthcare plan.

For more information on the CAP, please visit capqc.ca.

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