

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF
YOUTH

**GLOBALLY, NATIONALLY, AND
LOCALLY**

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DISCLOSURES

- ▶ I do not have an affiliation with a for profit or non-profit organization to disclose

OBJECTIVES

- ▶ To discuss the effects of COVID-19 on the mental health of youth on a global, national and local scale

SCHOOL CLOSURE

- ▶ Children and youth flourish in environments that are predictable, safe, and structured.
- ▶ COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted these protective factors making it difficult for children and youth to adapt and thrive.
- ▶ Pandemic related school closures, family stress, and trauma have led to increases in mental health problems in some children and youth.
- ▶ At the beginning of the pandemic, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimated school closures in 138 countries, which impacted 80% of children globally.

SCHOOL CLOSURE

- ▶ Two months into the pandemic, this rate increased to 188 countries affecting 1.7 billion students worldwide.
- ▶ Heading into the second year of the pandemic, UNESCO COVID-19 global monitoring of school closures indicated that half of the world students were still affected by partial or full school closures.
- ▶ Even when schools remained opened, the experience of schooling has been fundamentally altered.

SCHOOL CLOSURE

- ▶ Social distancing measures have been implemented in classes and during recess and breaks, substantially decreasing the amount of time students are able to interact with their peers and teachers.
- ▶ Although these changes were advised to prevent further infections, they were not inconsequential.

SCHOOL CLOSURE

- ▶ Of note are disruptions in the areas of skills development that are fundamental to optimal growth and wellness.
- ▶ Students learning and academic achievement have been negatively affected - especially for learners who were academically vulnerable before the pandemic (Whitley *et al.* 2021)
- ▶ Children and youth are now moving and playing less at school and in their communities than before the pandemic.

CANADA BEFORE THE PANDEMIC

- ▶ When it comes to mental health and youth in Canada, we were not doing that well before the pandemic.
- ▶ Prior to the pandemic, Canada's children and youth were not faring well relative to other economically advanced countries in terms of mental health and happiness
- ▶ Canada ranked 31 out of 38 high income countries on measures of well-being which was defined as feeling positive and being in good mental health
- ▶ Canada's ranking on physical health was also poor - ranking 30 out of 38 countries.

CANADA BEFORE THE PANDEMIC

- ▶ Canada's ranking on teen suicides was 35th out of 38 countries.
- ▶ Adolescent and young adult suicide data from Statistics Canada underscores that this risk is not equally shared
- ▶ Adolescent boys from First Nations and Inuit regions are particularly vulnerable.
- ▶ For the past three decades one in five Canadian children and youth have met diagnostic criteria for at least one mental disorder.

CANADA BEFORE THE PANDEMIC

- ▶ Between 50% and 75% of mental health disorders in adulthood begin before the age of 15.
- ▶ Canadian youth from the general population who demonstrated social anxiety symptoms at the age from 10 to 18 years were:
 - ▶ 20 times more likely to be depressed
 - ▶ 16 times more likely to have social anxiety disorder
 - ▶ 16 times more likely to have agoraphobia
 - ▶ 13 times more likely to have generalized anxiety disorder in adulthood

IMPACT OF SCHOOL CLOSURES

- ▶ Frontline mental health services are often provided in schools and if children and youth are not in school they may turn to tertiary care in emergency rooms in its place.
- ▶ Many hospitals are reporting increases in ER visits for mental health concerns
- ▶ Toronto's hospital for sick children has seen a 120% increase in ER visits during the pandemic for mental health concerns
- ▶ Since January 2021 the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario reported an "unprecedented" number of young patients admitted to the hospital in "severe mental health crises that left them suicidal."

INCREASED EMERGENCY ROOM USE

- ▶ According to the Children's Healthcare Canada 2021 report, children's hospitals are "experiencing on average:"
 - ▶ double the number of admissions following attempted suicide
 - ▶ a threefold increase in admissions related to substance abuse
 - ▶ 60% increase in the number of admissions related to eating disorders.
- ▶ In Ontario admissions for eating disorders were 223% above capacity in June 2021 for the province's five pediatric hospitals.

INCREASED EMERGENCY ROOM USE INTERNATIONALLY

- ▶ In the United States, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention noted:
 - ▶ 24% increase in mental health related ER visits for 5 to 11-year-olds
 - ▶ 31% increase for 12 to 17-year-olds at the beginning of the pandemic
- ▶ In Western Australia a 104% increase in ER visits and admissions was observed at the beginning of the pandemic for children with anorexia nervosa compared to the three previous years.

CANADIAN YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC

- ▶ The Ottawa Community Pediatricians Network noted that "when schools are open, children are able to get more support," but when schools are closed, pediatricians see "a surge of mental health disorders within their practices."
- ▶ A systematic review of 16 eligible studies on adolescent mental health have found "evidence to support the potential negative impact of the pandemic on adolescent mental health.
- ▶ 57% of Canadian youth between 15 to 17 have experienced a decline in perceived mental health

CANADIAN YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC

- ▶ Two cross-sectional studies conducted in the spring of 2020 and in the fall of 20 21 of 2000 Canadian children youth age 9-16 found that more youth were
 - ▶ bored (34%)
 - ▶ worried (27%)
 - ▶ sad (50%) during the pandemic compared to before the pandemic.
- ▶ Many youth (over 75%) also felt worried about the pandemic and were concerned that they were missing out on important life events
- ▶ Interestingly, over a quarter of youth surveyed (26%) felt that the pandemic had some positive effects on their lives including more time to spend with their family and more time to pursue their interests

CANADIAN YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC

- ▶ In a Canadian study of children age 6 to 18 from parent reports, and ages 10 to 18 for self-reports found that although 67 to 70% of children and youth "experience deterioration in at least one mental health domain," the mental health of some had actually improved (19 to 31%) during the pandemic.
- ▶ Rates of deterioration were greatest for those with a pre-existing diagnosis and among children who perceived greater stress from being socially isolated

CANADIAN YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC

- ▶ Unfortunately there are few longitudinal studies examining changes in children's mental health during the pandemic, even fewer studies with comparable population based pre-pandemic baseline data and none that are Canadian.
- ▶ The limited studies that exist suggest there is a deterioration of mental health and some children and youth however, results may not be as striking as those promoted in the media.

CANADIAN YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC

- ▶ In one of the Canadian studies of 184 adolescents from the community who were assessed on four occasions over the course of two years before the pandemic, and again during the pandemic, researchers found that "anxiety and depression scores were significantly higher than previous trajectories would have predicted"

LONGITUDINAL STUDY FROM U.S. SHOWING IMPROVEMENTS FROM SCHOOL CLOSURE?

- ▶ In an American study of 322 young adolescents with a mean age of 12, reductions in mental health problems were found for some youth who had elevated problems before the pandemic
- ▶ Specifically clinically significant reductions were found for internalizing, externalizing and total problems
- ▶ The conclusion drawn by the authors was that "COVID-19 stay at home regulations may offer protective effects for youth mental health" particularly for those who find school to be a stressful experience (social anxiety)

MORE INTERNATIONAL DATA

- ▶ Chinese study looking at 1241 youth before and during the pandemic found increased odds of being depressed, engaging in non-suicide or self injury, suicide ideation, suicide plans, and suicide attempts following the lockdown.
- ▶ A Norwegian study demonstrated there was a small increase in anxiety and depression for adolescence especially if living in lone parent homes.

INTERNATIONAL DATA

- ▶ An Australian study compared adolescent mental health one year before the pandemic and two years after the government restrictions and online learning were implemented – there were increases in depressive symptoms and anxiety along with a decrease in life satisfaction – these effects were especially evident in girls.
- ▶ Another study demonstrated that depression symptoms increased significantly during the first six months of the pandemic whereas anxiety symptoms remained stable across time.

WORSENING SYMPTOMS EARLY IN THE PANDEMIC

- ▶ A study of 415 youth demonstrated that symptoms of depression and anxiety peaked in the first spring of the pandemic (2020) and then decreased over the course of summer
- ▶ In the UK an increase of mental health struggles in youth demonstrated an increase from 10.8% in 2017 to 60% in July 2020 with the highest prevalence of mental health problems being found among adolescent girls
- ▶ A German study demonstrated the prevalence of mental health problems increased from 9.9% pre-pandemic to 17.8% by June 2020 with increases in anxiety being the most pronounced

INTERNATIONAL DATA

- ▶ A population based study of Icelandic adolescents assessed in 2016, 2018, and again in 2020 reported an increase in symptoms of depression and a worsening of mental well being in all age groups during the pandemic compared to before the pandemic with adolescent girls being found to be more affected than adolescent boys

THE LOCAL EXPERIENCE

- ▶ While the data across Canada demonstrated market increases in emergency room visits and admissions, this was not the experience in Manitoba.
- ▶ While emergency room consultations have increased significantly over the course of the last 20 years, it decreased significantly during the pandemic
 - ▶ Number of ER psychiatry consults by year in the Children's Emergency Room:
 - ▶ 2002 – total of 380 consults
 - ▶ 2010 – total of 1050 consults
 - ▶ 2019 - total of 1305 consults
 - ▶ 2020 - total of 450 consults

THE LOCAL EXPERIENCE

- ▶ Because of the low admission rates to PY1 North and South, by June 2020, PY1 South becomes the adult Covid positive unit
- ▶ PY1 remains at 50% capacity until the spring of 2022
- ▶ Since re-opening to full capacity, we have been running at 75% occupancy
- ▶ The one area where the demand for services has increased significantly during the pandemic has been with referrals to eating disorders with an increase of 300%

WHY IS MANITOBA DIFFERENT THAN OTHER AREAS OF THE COUNTRY?

- ▶ Manitoba had a higher rates of vaccination than many other parts of the country indicating that Manitobans were taking the pandemic seriously and were trying to limit the spread which may have resulted in fewer ER visits.
- ▶ Establishment of the Rural and Remote Telehealth Service which provided and opportunity for emergency psychiatry assessments to be completed with youth in their community

ACCESSING RESOURCES

- ▶ If you go to the Health Canada Website for youth:
- ▶ STAY HEALTHY: It's OK not to be especially when it feels like the world is turned upside down many people feel lonely and isolated and may be experiencing anxiety, grief, frustration, sadness and irritability but there are things we can do to take care of ourselves and support each other through this difficult time to remember to take care of your mental physical health by:
 - ▶ Taking breaks from social media and the news
 - ▶ Focussing on the good things and looking for positives in each day
 - ▶ Spending time doing things you enjoy, starting a hobby or learning a new skill
 - ▶ Asking for help and talking to a trusted adult

HEALTH CANADA WEBSITE

- ▶ Stay connected with your friends and extended family through:
 - ▶ texts
 - ▶ email
 - ▶ phone calls
 - ▶ video and voice chat
 - ▶ social media platforms

HEALTH CANADA WEBSITE

- ▶ You can also take care of your physical and mental health by keeping healthy habits in the regular routine such as:
 - ▶ Eating well
 - ▶ Being active
 - ▶ Getting enough sleep

HEALTH CANADA WEBSITE

- ▶ If you need someone to talk to you in confidence, reach out to a youth organization like:
 - ▶ Kids help phone
 - ▶ LGBT youth line
 - ▶ Canada Youth Network
 - ▶ Canadian suicide prevention service
 - ▶ COVID-19 youth mental Health resource hub

GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA WEBSITE

- ▶ https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/docs/mpsg_resources.pdf
- ▶ Manitoba Pandemic Support Guide:
 - ▶ AbilitiCBT
 - ▶ Online behavioural therapy program available to Manitobans aged 16 and over who are struggling with anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic
 - ▶ <https://manitoba.ca/covid19/bewell>

GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA WEBSITE

- ▶ Canadian Mental Health Association Service Navigation Hub
 - ▶ Specialists are available to help Manitobans find the best type of service to match their needs
 - ▶ <https://mbwpg.cmha.ca/cmha-service-navigation-hub/>

GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA WEBSITE

- ▶ Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba (ADAM) Support Line
 - ▶ 204-925-0040 - for anyone seeking support during this challenging time
 - ▶ www.adam.mb.ca/programs/anxiety-and-worry-support-program

GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA WEBSITE

- ▶ Manitoba Farm, Rural and Northern Support Services (MFRNSS)
 - ▶ offers free telephone and online counselling to farmer and rural and northern Manitobans
 - ▶ www.supportline.ca

GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA

- ▶ Stress Hacks
 - ▶ provides resources for youth, families, and educators
 - ▶ provides information on what stress is and how to manage it
 - ▶ www.stresshacks.ca

GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA WEBSITE

- ▶ Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba
 - ▶ self help organization that provides education, advocacy, and support to those living with a mood disorder
 - ▶ provides a peer support line and several online support groups
 - ▶ www.mooddisordersmanitoba.ca
 - ▶ peer support line 204-786-0987

GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA WEBSITE

- ▶ Klinik Crisis Line
 - ▶ crisis phone lines and online support services
 - ▶ provides free and confidential counselling, support and referral for people who are suicidal, in crisis, or struggling to cope
 - ▶ <http://klinik.mb.ca/crisis-support>
 - ▶ 24/7 crisis line 204-786-8686

GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA WEBSITE

- ▶ Rainbow Resource
 - ▶ offers counselling, education, and programming support to the 2SLGBTQ+ community
 - ▶ during the pandemic it is offering all support services ph phone, and through Instagram, Facebook and Zoom
 - ▶ <https://rainbowresourcecentre.org>

GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA

- ▶ Youth Mobile Crisis
 - ▶ The Youth Crisis Stabilization System Intake Service is available to youth and families
 - ▶ 204-949-4777

CENTRALIZED INTAKE

- ▶ Offered to residents of Winnipeg who are in need of mental health assessments
- ▶ Anyone can call - youth, parents, teachers, social workers, nurses, physicians
- ▶ Can access all of the mental health services through the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre and PsychHealth.
- ▶ 204-958-9660

QUESTIONS?

- ▶ Thank you!