

EDITORIAL

Caring for our most vulnerable patients

This Fall 2017 issue of our Journal contains a diverse array of content relevant to providing care to vulnerable populations. I am quite certain there will be something of interest to all our readers in this edition.

Our lead article is a joint statement from the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the Canadian Paediatric Society providing recommendations for screening of preschool disruptive behaviours in primary care. The authors provide a structured approach to assessment and intervention that is both highly clinically relevant and user friendly. I particularly appreciate the inclusion of recommended high yield behaviour questions and standardized tools to screen parents for behavioural risk indicators in precious little people.

We have a thoughtful critique by McLennan and Braumberger of the CMAJ 2016 Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) guideline (Cook et al., 2016). The authors thoughtfully discuss four points of concern with the guidelines, each which they argue will increase confusion about the interface or distinctiveness of FASD and other mental health conditions. An issue with the new FASD diagnostic criteria that will affect most clinicians is the inclusion of “affect dysregulation” as well as separation of inattentive and hyperactive/impulsive symptoms as 3 potential criteria for FASD. This alone will mean that most of my patients should have FASD as a listed differential diagnosis. They also highlight their concerns regarding the methodological rigour used in this guideline to generate both recommendations and strength of the recommendations which they note were notably stronger than other published guidelines for FASD. We are pleased to publish this paper as I am hopeful it will generate discussion about this critically important problem.

Two articles present innovative psycho-educational interventions for patients. Ferrari and Archie report innovative knowledge translation work with youth at risk for psychosis. This paper is the 4th and final article in a telepsychiatry focussed series in our Journal. They have developed an educational video game devised to educate youth about psychosis and motivate them to participate in treatment. This article reports on the impressions of family physicians who reviewed the video. A second paper by Chow and colleagues discusses preliminary data on the efficacy of a pre-surgical intervention to reduce anxiety in children about to undergo surgery – in this case ENT surgery.

Smith and colleagues’ research paper highlights several critically important knowledge bytes about screening for homelessness and being particularly cautious to screen for mental health difficulties in homeless youth. They screened for mental health symptoms, substance use problems and violence/criminal behaviour in youth presenting at various community service agencies, including mental health clinics. They found that that just shy of 20% of youth were homeless or at risk of homelessness. These youth, compared to stably housed youth, had higher self reported violent/criminal behaviour and substance abuse difficulties. Also of interest was that in females, homelessness was associated with substance use difficulties.

Collaborative care partnerships involving youth psychiatrists and clinicians with family health teams (FHT) have been growing in number across our great country over the past decades. Rousseau and colleagues tested the association between FHT organizational factors and providers’ perception of inter-professional collaboration within 6 family health teams in Montreal. In all 104 providers surveyed, the teams had been in action for 6 months to 5 years. The researchers found that co-location of the psychiatrist (and likely the therapists) within the physical location of the FHT was the main driver of collaboration and reported satisfaction with collaboration. Again, evidence that child psychiatrists and therapists are nice people to hang out with. If only there were more of us to go around.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Dr. Joanna Henderson, PhD for her two years of service to the Journal as Assistant Editor. Joanna has provided in-depth and considerate evaluation of manuscripts and has helped to increase our productivity significantly. Dr. Gina Dimitropoulos, MSW, PhD from University of Calgary in the school of Social Work is taking her place. We are very pleased to benefit from her methodological expertise in qualitative methods and to recruit more submissions from our social work colleagues.

On behalf of our Editorial Board, we look forward to seeing you at our Annual Meeting in Ottawa in September.

Reference

Cook JL, Green CR, Lilley CM, Anderson SM, Baldwin ME, Chudley AE, Conry JL, LeBlanc N, Loock CA, Lutke J, Mallon BF, McFarlane AA, Temple VK, Rosales T. (2016) *Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: a guideline for diagnosis across the lifespan. CMAJ; 188(3):191-7*