



UPDATE FROM THE CACAP EXECUTIVE

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As we seem to be leaving the pandemic behind us, we continue to face the toll it has taken on the mental health needs of children and youth.

We are all aware of high volumes, increased demand, and waiting lists across the country. It has been a true awakening and an opportunity for action.

According to data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) hospitalizations for young women 10-17 years old with eating disorders increased by almost 60% since March 2020. Young women aged 15 to 17 were twice as likely to be hospitalized for a mental health disorder as their male peers. Use of mood and anxiety medication has been steadily increasing over the last 5 years, with rates twice higher for females (15-24) than males. More than 1/4 of the children and youth hospitalized for all mental health conditions live in the least-affluent neighbourhoods. However, 1/3 of children and youth hospitalized for eating disorders live in the most-affluent neighbourhoods (CIHI, May 2022). As it becomes obvious from this limited data, mental health issues do not affect everyone to the same extent.

It is extremely important today, in Canada, to face this reality with the conviction that **we can do better!** We live in a G7 country with one of the world's largest advanced economies and one of the wealthiest liberal democracies. We have an obligation to ensure the best mental health care to our most vulnerable population, our children, and our youth. As members of the CACAP we are committed to "advancing the mental health of children, youth and families through promotion of excellence in care, advocacy, education, research and collaboration, with other professionals" (Mission statement, CACAP).

It is imperative, more than ever, that we mobilize together, child psychiatrists and mental health professionals, and that we explore innovative ways, shared care models, combined

direct and indirect care with telepsychiatry and transfer of knowledge, to address the needs of the population.

Members of our executive had a meeting with the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Senator Stanley Kutcher. We had the opportunity to discuss the need for data and for national mental health standards. Both are invited to our annual conference, being held jointly with AACAP, in October.

Climate change and extreme weather conditions continue to destroy property and disrupt lives, becoming a source of worry and anxiety for some of our young patients. The CACAP participated in a meeting of "Choosing Wisely Canada" to explore the role of physicians in the protection of our environment and on ensuring sustainability.

As the world around us looks on in bewilderment at the continuing gun violence and at innocent victims of an unjust war, we advocate for gun control and we respond with action. In June we opened all our educational resources to colleagues from Ukraine who are facing a mental health crisis of young people with "high levels of anxiety, depression, ... suicidal ideation among teenagers especially... and those who already became victims of violence..." (Dr. OT, Lviv, Ukraine, personal communication).

Last spring, we held our retreat, and we continue to advance our strategic objectives.

The CACAP is partnering with organizations like Children's Healthcare Canada to look at innovative solutions for delivery of better care to children and youth across the country. Collaboration with professional groups and community organizations that advocate for child and youth mental health is a priority.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion continue to be at the heart of our vision for Canada's youth, and equity starts with access

to quality care for every child or youth, regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

This conviction drives our advocacy and our position statements. We are currently looking into enhancing the infrastructure that will permit us to better support the dissemination of these statements and will increase our impact.

We want to see best practices implemented across the country.

Our education committee is working on a series of events that will offer access to debates, presentations, and references to academic resources in the convenience of our home.

Our membership committee is working hard to ensure excellent value for our members, and we are planning a mentorship program based on our survey that revealed a significant number wishing to be mentors or mentees.

During the last year we have been working with the AACAP on our joint annual meeting and we have very interesting collaborations emerging in the co-development of the program. Our President, Dr De Souza, met with AACAP President, Dr Warren Ng, and agreed on an Indigenous townhall that will allow attendees to bear witness to the experiences of Indigenous peoples.

As we are preparing for the upcoming conference we are looking forward to being in each other's presence, to experience the intellectual stimulation and to enjoy the fellowship of colleagues. But most of all we are looking for ways to improve the lives of children, youth and families touched by mental illness and to help them develop to their full potential.

Looking forward to seeing everyone in Toronto!