

COMMUNIQUÉ

THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF ONTARIO FASD CLINICS MARCH 15, 2007, TORONTO

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ABSTRACT

In the recent inaugural meeting of all Ontario FASD Diagnostic Clinics each clinic identified their strengths and weaknesses. The group agreed to develop a FASD diagnostic clinic website which would list all of the clinics available in Ontario. This would enable people to identify clinics near their areas. In addition, it would increase public awareness of FASD and the shortage of such facilities

With sponsorship of the federal Public Health Agency of Canada, the Ontario FASD group meeting recently convened individuals with a vested interest in FASD diagnostic clinics. Stakeholders in attendance informed the forum on their state of FASD clinics. They identified their patient population: adults, children or both. Attendees were encouraged to identify strengths and challenges in their clinic operations. A common theme among clinics was the need to urgently identify sources of funding for operations and staffing. The need for psychologists was also stressed.

Northwestern Ontario FASD Clinic - Kenora and Sioux Lookout

The Northwestern Ontario FASD (diagnostic) Clinic with clinic sites in Sioux Lookout and Kenora suspended operations in July 2006 due to lack of funding. Initially established as a demonstration project in 2005, this clinic received over 250 referrals in an 18 month period. At the time of their closing they had 62 patients on their waiting list. The Winnipeg FASD diagnostic clinic (Clinic for Alcohol and Drug Exposed Children) began to refuse referrals of patients from Northwestern Ontario since the opening of the Northwestern Ontario FASD clinic. As such

patients residing in Northwestern Ontario have been left without access to diagnosis. This group is actively seeking funding to reinstate the clinic.

Peel Infant Development - Peel Region

The Peel region received funding to provide FASD diagnostic training for a multidisciplinary team. After receiving the training they established a FASD diagnosis team that diagnoses children between the ages of 0-6 years. Since there is no dedicated funding for the team, this is a virtual team. To achieve the necessary funding required for psychological assessment, they access funding from service resolution and extended healthcare benefits. Service resolution allots funding used to access services that are not readily available in certain areas. Extended healthcare benefits (private insurance) are often the source of funding for families who have these benefits.

Breaking the Cycle FASD Clinic, Mothercraft - Toronto

Mothercraft's Breaking the Cycle (BTC) program in Toronto primarily operates with the funding support of the Public Health Agency of Canada and the in-kind contributions from partner organizations. The FASD Assessment and Diagnostic Clinic operate in the context of the comprehensive

services offered at BTC. Mothercraft contributes the psychologist on the assessment/diagnostic team, as well as the clinic coordinator, case managers, and early intervention staff; the pediatrician on the team is contributed by the Motherisk Program, a partner in BTC. Unlike most FASD diagnostic clinics, their strength lies in their ability to engage and work directly with the biological mother and child. They also have experience in how to support caregivers to decrease placement breakdowns. This is one of the very few clinics that also offer FASD diagnosis for adult mothers.

FASD Durham - Durham Region

The Durham FASD diagnostic clinic is a virtual team. This team received training in Seattle. Durham has a preschool and a school age team. The Grandview Team assess children ages 0 to 6 years, and a school age team conducts their intake and coordination through Resources for Exceptional Children. Together they wish to expand their FASD diagnostic team into the community and therefore expand their ability to diagnose by integrating diagnosis into the medical service. A logistical problem they have overcome is documentation storage, which has been resolved by storing the files in the team physician's office.

St. Michael FASD Clinic, St Michaels Hospital -Toronto

St. Michael's Hospital FASD diagnostic clinic is a multidisciplinary team that offers diagnoses and plans of care to clients of all ages (birth throughout adulthood). St. Michael's FASD Clinic and **Native Child and Family Services of Toronto FASD Clinic** collaborate to ensure appropriate diagnostic services to aboriginal and non-aboriginal clients. St. Michael's have identified an urgent need for training of psychologists and designated funds for psychological services. St. Michael's is currently initiating Telediagnosis to provide diagnosis to Northern Communities. St. Michael's conducts research and education to improve outcomes of those with FASD, and is willing to train emerging teams.

Anishnawbe's Health FASD Clinic - Toronto

Anishnawbe's diagnostic team was established in collaboration with St. Joseph's Health Centre. This clinic provides an Aboriginal traditional

holistic approach. Their strength lies in directly serving the aboriginal populations.

Motherisk FASD Clinic, Hospital for Sick Children - Toronto

The Motherisk FASD diagnostic clinic is a multidisciplinary team at the Hospital for Sick Children that works in collaboration with agencies including Children's Aid Services and other ministries. In addition to diagnosis, Motherisk conducts large-scale research in various aspects of FASD. Motherisk is currently providing training in FASD diagnosis throughout Canada and is willing to train emerging FASD clinics. Motherisk is able to provide video conferencing to assist other teams to provide a complete diagnosis.

Surrey Place - Toronto

Surrey Place Centre offers clinical and diagnostic services to individuals with developmental disabilities of all ages. Currently, they are designated as an emerging team for FASD diagnosis for adults. They have psychologists, nurses, speech pathologists and behaviour therapists on their diagnostic team. Surrey Place also works with various Associations for Community Living in northern Ontario on a videoconferencing program. They hope to use this technology to perform diagnostic assessments in remote areas including psychological and other forms of assessment. Facilitators need to be trained and testing takes longer- however using videoconferencing overcomes the problem of no service in some areas.

Peterborough

Peterborough needs to identify source of funding for psychologists. Their strength lies in their speaker's bureau.

Norwest Health Centre - Thunder Bay

Although this clinic does not offer diagnostic services at this time they are considered an emerging clinic. Presently and on a regular basis, they make referrals to diagnostic clinics, prepare, complete and send out the FASD Referral package, arrange travel/accommodation if necessary, assist with finding travel subsidy, and follow up with the family after the diagnostic assessment. The Norwest Health Centre in Thunder Bay provides training and education of individuals regarding FASD diagnosis.

Hamilton

Hamilton is an emerging FASD diagnosis team. McMaster University currently has several physicians who diagnose children 0-6 years using the 4-digit code, however, this does not include complete evaluation (including psychometric assessment). They have been able to secure funding for a coordinator from the Trillium foundation for 2 years. They will be seeking additional funding to sustain the clinic.

Kingston

Kingston is also an emerging FASD diagnosis team who hopes to establish a clinic in the near future. They need to be trained on FASD diagnosis. Their sources of funding include Trillium Grant, Children and Youth Services Fiscal dollars.

Need for Training

It was suggested that healthcare providers may be interested in attending FASD diagnostic workshop and trained to diagnose using the 4-digit code if they receive CME points. Healthcare professionals working with persons affected by FASD should also be trained on how to adapt their therapy because persons affected with FASD may learn in different manners. Therefore trying to teach in standard manner may not be effective. Ontario also needs to develop a protocol on how to diagnose adults with FASD. Moreover, it was suggested that a parent be part of the FASD diagnosis team. The parent would be able to offer peer support to parents of newly diagnosed children and educate them on how to get past legal hurdles. The diagnosis team in Seattle, Washington currently includes parents on their FASD diagnostic team and has found this approach successful. A standardized summary tool for Canadian psychiatrists which summarize psychiatric findings in the patient charts is needed to make it easier for health care providers to quickly review charts prior to seeing patients for their appointment.

Potential Sources of Funding

Funding in existing clinics is largely done through donations, in kind and grants. This is not a long-term sustainable solution. As FASD is an acquired brain injury resulting from alcohol exposure, the Province of Ontario must recognize the need to fund FASD as western Canadian provinces have done.

Next Steps

The group agreed to develop a FASD Diagnostic Clinic website which would list all of the FASD clinics available in Ontario. This would enable caregivers to locate the closest diagnostic centre where they can have their child assessed for FASD. The FASD Stakeholders for Ontario Diagnostic Working Group is committed to continue to strengthen a network for FASD Diagnostic Clinics in Ontario.

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