

QFHT NEWS

FALL/WINTER
2021

NEWS & INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS OF THE QUEEN'S FAMILY HEALTH TEAM

Keeping your Boat Afloat

"We are not all in the same boat. We are all in the same storm. Some are on super-yachts. Some have just the one oar."

Damian Barr, British writer and broadcaster. George Takei Just Shared This Thought Of Mine...

By Erin Desmarais, MSW, and Jessica Waller, MSW, Queen's Family Health Team

We are 19 months into the pandemic and life as we know it has changed. We have been required to constantly adjust our lifestyle, daily routines, social contacts (amongst many other things!), and this has resulted in significant sacrifice and hardship for many.

Although seemingly in a new phase, it remains uncertain how the pandemic will continue to unfold. This adds to the pre-existing emotional load we have been carrying. As we begin to contemplate finding our "new normal," it triggers questions such as "What is normal?" "How do I balance the ongoing risk of COVID with meeting my social, emotional, spiritual, and physical needs?" "What will work/school/home life look like now?" "Why don't I feel better?" These questions can feel overwhelming and challenging to navigate.

As reported by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), it is important to acknowledge the tremendous amount of grief and loss the pandemic has created. These losses can take a variety of forms and impact us individually and collectively, looking different for everyone. They can include losing a loved one, a job, a routine, a hobby, or anything else that has left/changed our lives. Due to the amount of loss during the pandemic,

and the "crisis mode" from which we have been operating, our ability to process our grief has been compromised.

Although the future remains uncertain, it is possible to begin the process of healing. There are different ways to facilitate this process. For some, their "boat" may only require minor repairs, but for others, a complete rebuild and additional supports will be needed.

Here are some suggested ways you can start on this journey of healing:

- 1) Observe and validate: Observing and validating our emotions without judgement can help us to better understand our needs and to develop a supportive plan to meet them.
- 2) Stick to the basics: Taking care of our basic wellbeing (eating, exercise, sleep) can help protect our ability to cope during this difficult time. Self-care looks different for everyone, and it is important to take note of what works for you (nature, connecting with others, time alone, etc.) and to make it part of your routine.
- 3) Acknowledge and respect your boundaries: As the restrictions ease, it is important to reflect on your needs and comfort zone, adjusting these at your own pace. This includes work,

home, social life, etc. Keep your perfectionistic tendencies in check and adjust your expectations with a self-compassionate attitude.

- 4) Practise radical acceptance: Acknowledge the reality of the situation and practise acceptance of this. This does not mean approval but helps us to recognize what we have control over versus what we don't, and to implement healthy coping strategies.
- 5) Find a balance between old and new: Re-visit activities and coping strategies that have worked and brought joy in the past, while establishing a new routine. Be patient as you re-integrate yourself into the community. This will naturally cause discomfort and anxiety, but it is important to take small steps to overcome this.

So, we ask you to take a minute to reflect on what condition your "boat" is in. Depending on your circumstances, you may still be in the eye of the storm, while for others the hurricane may seem to have passed. Whatever boat you find yourself in, we encourage you to reflect on ways you can make yourself feel better through observation, connection, learning, and giving.

RESOURCES

[Tolerance for Uncertainty: A COVID-19 Workbook \(mncfn.ca\)](#)

[Mental Health and the COVID-19 Pandemic \(CAMH\)](#)

[Coping with COVID-19 \(Anxiety Canada\) COVID-19 \(CMHA\)](#)

For a list of local resources, check out:

[Health Resources: COVID-19 \(qfht.ca\)](#)

[United Way KFL&A](#)

FAST FACTS

GET YOUR FLU SHOT!

We will host a flu shot clinic, by appointment only, on: **Saturday, Dec. 4: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

Please call the flu line at (613) 533-9303, Ext. 71947, to book your flu shot. If you receive your flu shot elsewhere, please call the flu line to let us know. You may also receive your flu shot during your regular appointment; just ask your doctor or nurse.

COVID-19 VACCINES

Looking for information to explain the various types of COVID-19 vaccines and how they work?

[Click here](#) to read about mRNA vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna) and [here](#) for viral-vector vaccines (AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD and Johnson and Johnson).

[Click here](#) to read a Ministry of Health fact sheet on this topic.

[Click here](#) to visit the COVID-19 page on our website.

AFTER HOURS CLINIC

During the pandemic, we cannot accept walk-in visits to our after-hours clinic. Patients who require urgent after-hours care must call 613-533-6563 during after-hours clinic hours only (Monday-Thursday: 4:45 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and Saturday from 12:45 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.) and leave a message. (If you call outside of these hours, we will not receive your message.) Nursing staff will review your message and call you back for further assessment, and give you a telephone (or video) appointment or direct you to visit the clinic in person at 115 Clarence St.

For more information about our after-hours clinic, [click here](#).



Our resident physicians gathered at Camp Oconto, just north of Kingston, in September to learn and participate in a variety of engaging outdoor team-building activities.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR DEPARTMENT HEAD

The past 19 months have been a very challenging time for everyone. The global pandemic has affected the delivery of health care as well as health-care professionals, including your team here at Queen's Department of Family Medicine — the physicians, resident physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, and administrative staff members.

But we know the pandemic has also affected YOU, our valued patients of the Queen's Family Health Team (QFHT). Over these many months, COVID-19 has created many challenges unique to you, and I want you to know that through it all, you have been our primary focus.

Our official "tag line" here at Queen's Department of Family Medicine is: "For Learners. For Patients. For Communities." As you can see in these words that represent what's most important to us, you are at the centre of everything we do.

You are truly a part of our QFHT family, and I want to personally thank you for your patience and understanding as we walk this pandemic path together. We have been required to make many adjustments and adopt new systems to adhere to provincial COVID-19 restrictions, and I greatly appreciate your patience when we have needed to learn new and sometimes challenging ways of providing our patients the best care possible.

I know it hasn't been easy, and we haven't always done things perfectly, but we have always done our very best for you under these extraordinary circumstances.

As we continue to work our way through this pandemic, and for the months and years to come, we will be steadfast in our ongoing commitment to give you the best experience as a patient of the Queen's Family Health Team.

Thank you for entrusting us to your care.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael Green, Head
Queen's Department of Family Medicine

SPOTLIGHT



Our smoking cessation program is celebrating 10 Years!

Thanks to our wonderful team: (Standing) Diane Cross, clinic manager; Rhonda Gauthier, RN; Cecilia Kopecki, reception; and Dr. Ed McNally. (Seated) Elizabeth Hughson, RN; and Jennifer MacDaid, clinical program co-ordinator.

SMOKING CESSATION PROGRAM

The Queen's Family Health Team (QFHT) Smoking Cessation Program has been supporting our patients to quit or reduce smoking for 10 years!

Since 2011, our goal has been to help smokers manage their tobacco use and nicotine addiction. Our specialized nurse counsellors provide confidential, non-judgmental counselling and support to registered QFHT patients, whether a patient wants to quit, hopes to reduce, or is looking for help managing cravings and withdrawal symptoms. Even if a patient is not ready to quit, our counsellors are happy to talk about tobacco use and provide some tools to prepare for cessation in the future.

The QFHT uses the Ottawa Model for Smoking Cessation (OMSC) program as the framework for our smoking-cessation program. This program is a simple, systematic approach to addressing tobacco use with smokers and to supporting quitting using the best available evidence-based treatments. Using the OMSC Quit Plan, our counsellors work with patients to find individualized smoking-cessation strategies they can fit into their lives.

In conjunction with the OMSC, we also partner with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's (CAMH) Smoking Treatment for Ontario Patients (STOP) program, which provides FREE nicotine-replacement therapy (NRT) for our patients. Since its inception in 2005, the STOP program has provided free smoking-cessation medication and counselling support to more than 280,000 Ontarians who have wanted to quit smoking. Encouraging smoking cessation is the most effective intervention a clinician can make to improve a patient's quality of life.

In the past 10 years, the QFHT has provided 6,459 patient appointments in the smoking cessation clinic. Since 2014, NRT (including patches, inhalers, gum, and lozenges) has been dispensed in 90.5 per cent of visits through the STOP program, supporting a total of 1,339 patients. Statistics show that 27.5 per cent of patients had remained smoke-free at their 12-month follow-up. Patients are able to continue in the program as many times as necessary to quit smoking.

Over the past couple of years, and particularly since the start of the pandemic, the QFHT has expanded counselling to include telephone appointments and follow-up, which our patients have appreciated. Under the supervision of Dr. Ed McNally, counselling is also now available to non-QFHT patients who have been introduced to our program as family members of our current patients. We're also now collecting information about vaping and marijuana use.

Smoking cessation is hard, but with the right support, medication, and tools, it is achievable. Every year, thousands of people in Ontario go smoke-free and enjoy the boost to their health and quality of life almost immediately.

Thank you to our counsellors, team members, and patients for 10 years of success with smoking cessation!

For more information about our smoking cessation program, visit qfht.ca's [Programs and Services](#) page.

PATIENT PROFILE

Stopping smoking is the most important thing I've done to improve my health and quality of life.

After 30 years of heavy smoking, I became a non-smoker by using previously acquired skills from all my past attempts along with Queen's Family Health Team's smoking cessation program, which provided the nicotine patch and gum and Allen Carr's "Easy Way to Quit Smoking."

I have abundant energy, look and feel so much better, have saved roughly \$30,000, and, best of all, that constant horrible phlegm is gone from my throat!

Setting a quit date and nicotine replacement therapies worked well for me because they relieved withdrawal symptoms of anxiety, depression, difficulty concentrating, insomnia, irritability, restlessness, and cravings.

The fact is that I am not being deprived of anything; it is the smokers who are being deprived of their freedom, health, and money, etc.

Daily practices including positive self-talk, saving the \$7 I would have spent on cigarettes, listing "Five Reasons to Stay Cigarette-Free" and "Five Things I am Grateful For," and praying and thanking God are several tools in my arsenal I use to avoid that first puff that would lead me back to active addiction.

Before my quit date, in intervals, I cleaned (made my car and home smoke-free) and broke the habits, one by one, of smoking with beverages, while on the phone, after meals, etc.

I no longer fool myself that I can have just one puff. One puff is a guarantee that I will be plummeted back into the bondage and morass of the hideous and heinous addiction.

It is so much easier to stay smoke-free than to have to gain freedom again, if I have that one puff.

More than seven million people globally die every year from tobacco use and, just for today, I don't have to be one of those statistics!



Kay-Lynne Miller

RESIDENT PHYSICIANS AND YOU

In June of 2020, I packed up my life in Vancouver and drove across the country to Kingston to start my family medicine residency. I had no idea what to expect: moving to a city where I knew no one, into an apartment I had found on Kijiji, in the midst of a global pandemic.



Dr. Jacqueline Sproule

When I first arrived in Kingston, I was immediately blown away by the incredible sense of community the people of this city displayed. In a time when masks were optional and infrequently worn in many other places, Kingston had a mask mandate that everyone seemed to respect rather than thwart. As vaccines became available, this city again came together, rolling up their sleeves to be vaccinated at a greater rate than many other regions.

The residency experience I have had was not the one I expected when I became a physician; I have seen both the physical fallout from COVID infections as well as the mental health burden of this pandemic. The negative consequences of everything that has occurred, and continues to occur, have not been lost on me.

However, in the year I have lived in Kingston, I have been proud to be a part of this community. I believe we can be proud of the strength Kingstonians have demonstrated, and I know we can continue to celebrate that unity moving forward.

*Dr. Jacqueline Sproule
Resident Co-Lead 2021-2022
Kingston-Thousand Islands Site*



A grateful patient receives her COVID-19 vaccine at the Queen's Family Health Team.

CLINIC CONVERSATION

We are pleased to return to publishing *QFHT News*, our regular communication with our patients regarding services and activities provided here at Queen's Family Health Team (QFHT).

We thank you for your patience and understanding as we have weathered the many changes during the pandemic storm that necessitated putting this newsletter on hold for the last year-and-a-half. Our hope is that with a greater than 85 per cent vaccination rate in our community, we will continue to move forward with a return to more in-person patient visits, group programs, regular preventive care, and ongoing primary care services for you, our patients.

The QFHT continues to offer the COVID-19 vaccine to our patients, and the annual flu vaccine has also arrived and is available to you. Please check [our website](#) for updates on vaccine clinics and the [KFL&A Public Health website](#) for other locations to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. ([Click here](#) for more options in KFL&A to receive your flu shot.)

As our cover page article notes, our health and well-being require a holistic approach that includes our physical, mental, spiritual, and social needs. Several Queen's Department of Family Medicine physicians and staff members are active leaders and participants in the regional planning for the new Frontenac Lennox and Addington Ontario Health Team (FLA OHT). The FLA OHT is working toward providing more efficient, integrated, and equitable health care to the people of the FLA region. Ontario health teams are being designed to make it easier for people to navigate the health system and to access the support and care they need as they transition from one health service provider or setting to another. For more information, visit the [FLA OHT website](#).

We welcome your input and suggestions about our clinic operations. At any time, feel free to contact me or your care provider.

We are Family Medicine.
For Learners. For Patients. For Communities.

To you in good health,
Diane Cross
Clinic Manager

Do we have your current email address? If not, please send it to info@dfm.queensu.ca so we can keep you and your family well informed.