



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada

Schizophrenia Quality Standards

Newsletter: March 2025



Schizophrenia
Quality Standards
National
Demonstration Project



Ontario Shores
Centre for Mental Health Sciences

As part of a nationwide effort to advance schizophrenia care in Canada, the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) and Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences (Ontario Shores) have been collaborating to support the implementation of Health Quality Ontario's Schizophrenia Quality Standards (Standards) at four health-care sites across Canada. The demonstration project involves the implementation of the Standards to improve schizophrenia care delivery and outcomes, along with an evaluation team to measure the impact of implementing the Standards on patients and families.

An integral component of this demonstration project is an Evaluation Working Group (EWG), comprised of the project's four demonstration sites, which meets monthly. This group plans, conducts and reports on high-quality evaluations related to the project's implementation, tailored to regional and community needs. Over the course of the project, the EWG has been tasked with co-designing methods of collecting information from patients and families to learn about their journey of recovery through participating in the demonstration project. The project's evaluation plan emphasized involving people with lived and living experience to understand fully the extent to which patients and families benefited from treatments based on the Standards, along with any desired improvements in care. Demonstration site members of the EWG set out over the course of implementation to engage with patients and families through one-to-one interviews, surveying, storytelling, and arts-based evaluation, to better understand their experience with the implementation of the Standards.

Storytelling empowers patients and families to act as "lead users" in their experience. This approach gives them the opportunity to share their personal narratives and express their thoughts and emotions about the journey they've gone on. Among the sites, patients and families shared their stories through the following means:

Oral storytelling

involved oral communication between the patient or family member and a peer support worker, or within a group.

Written storytelling

involved sharing stories using pen and paper or electronic methods.

Arts-based evaluation, although a newer method of data collection, allows evaluators to capture deeper meanings rooted in feelings about lived experiences. Followed by interviews or written narratives with peer support workers, this method includes:

Photo elicitation

(i.e., incorporating photographs into interviews to assess how the patient responds to the images)

Art making

(i.e., drawing or painting)

Imaginative interviewing

The EWG recently met to discuss the results of this evaluation phase and to present findings. Overall, the demonstration sites' patients and families found that implementation:

- improved their mood, motivation, sociability, resiliency, and communication
- reduced cognitive symptoms typically associated with schizophrenia
- improved connection with their family and general support systems
- provided structure in their lives, enhancing their ability to complete daily tasks and engage in new hobbies.

Feedback we have received from patients in support of their treatment experience with the Schizophrenia Quality Standards project:

"There are feelings of hope and optimism for the future, [the treatment] is helping, yeah. It's helped my confusion and anxiety. My experience has been healing. I hope I'm on a path to a meaningful life."

"There definitely are days when I wake up and I'm like, I don't actually want to take my pills today. And then I take them because I think, like, maybe I would like to feel better this morning. So, yeah, I take the medication and I'm glad to take them right now ... I just feel more uppity and less blah and less nervous, ruminating less now post-treatment"

"I like it [CBT(p)] because it's not prescription, you know? It's a way that they're actually trying to improve the way your brain thinks instead of just throwing medication at it."

"The greatest benefit was having someone else [family] understand my condition better. It's complex and internal, and the diagnosis alone doesn't convey how it manifests for me."



This collage was created by a patient engaging in arts-based evaluation. They indicated that they saw a positive transformation from when they first came into the program wide-eyed, vulnerable, and helpless like the bunny in the bottom left corner. The leaves in various stages of colour represent the seasonal cycles and the positive transformation they are going through. Specifically, the patient mentioned, “[I] came to [the program] as a moth and I am half-way to turning into a butterfly

Looking Ahead

Thank you to all the members of the EWG for your continuous dedication to the evaluation of this project. As we look ahead to the summer of 2025, and the highly anticipated launch of the **National Implementation Toolkit**, the insights brought forward will continue to guide the work of the demonstration sites and inform the nationwide rollout of the Schizophrenia Quality Standards.

Interested in learning more about this project and joining our mailing list? [Visit the MHCC website.](#)

Interested in learning more about the implementation? [Visit the Ontario Shores website.](#)



Schizophrenia
Quality Standards
National
Demonstration Project

