

SPRING 2025

WELCOME

We are excited to bring you this first edition of the Virtual Behavioural Medicine (VBM) newsletter! Our goal is to keep you informed about the latest updates, developments, and initiatives within the VBM program, which is offered collaboratively at Baycrest and UHN Toronto Rehab Institute (TRI) to support individuals with neuropsychiatric symptoms of dementia and their caregivers. In this newsletter, you'll find program highlights, patient stories, upcoming events, and more. We also look forward to sharing insights from our team and partners, celebrating successes, and keeping you connected.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement with our program!

~ The VBM Team

IMPACT

Mr. P., an 84-year-old with a family history of cognitive disorders, joined the VBM program after struggling with severe behavioural symptoms caused by mixed dementia. At the time, his behaviours; paranoid delusions, irritability, agitation, hypersexuality, suicidal ideation, and physical aggression, had rendered him ineligible for long-term care (LTC). The severity of his condition placed significant strain on both his family and care providers.

Through the VBM program, Mr. P. received comprehensive pharmacological management to address his complex behaviours. Under the team's guidance, his behaviours were significantly reduced, allowing him to become eligible for LTC placement. This was a critical turning point, as it ensured he could transition to a safer and more supportive environment. Recognizing the importance of continuity, the VBM team provided ongoing virtual support throughout Mr. P.'s transition. This ensured that his behavioural improvements were maintained both during and after the move to LTC. The outcome was remarkable. Mr. P. not only settled well into his new environment, but his symptoms remained managed, allowing for a smoother adjustment and improved quality of life.

COLLABORATION CORNER

"The VBM team has been kind, patient, and truly dedicated to helping. After a year of struggling to find support for my mom, they made all the difference - giving us hope and the care we desperately needed."

- Daughter of a VBM patient



SOCIAL WORK

A dementia diagnosis affects not only the diagnosed individual but also their entire family and caregiving team. Social workers play a vital role in helping both individuals and families navigate the many challenges associated with the disease. A comprehensive understanding of dementia is essential for social workers to see the "big picture of the illness" and offer meaningful support. Since each case and family is unique, social workers build trust and carefully assess the specific needs of individuals and caregivers to provide tailored assistance.

Caregiver support: Social workers can offer individual, family counselling, and group therapy, addressing stress, anticipatory loss, anxiety, social isolation, changing relationships, and managing responsive behaviours.

Referral: Social workers conduct needs assessments, helping caregivers navigate the healthcare system and connect with resources like homecare, counselling, mental health services, respite care, and long-term care.

Advocacy: Social workers can assist caregivers in accessing entitled services and advocate for additional support, which is especially valuable for those too exhausted to navigate the complex process themselves.

Education: Information sharing with caregivers who are confronted with an ever-changing disease process is essential. Common themes include stages of dementia, stress reduction, compassionate dementia care, effective communication strategies and ethics. Social workers are able to build positive relationships, identify needs and care for those impacted by dementia in a kind and caring way, while at the same time providing practical tools, resources and support.

CAREGIVERS

NEW E-LEARNING

We are excited to introduce our new, free E-Learning platform, specifically designed for caregivers and families of individuals living with dementia who experience neuropsychiatric symptoms. This user-friendly platform offers a variety of modules covering essential concepts related to dementia and the VBM care model. Our goal is to help caregivers gain a clearer understanding of the VBM program, including the support we provide and goals of our care model. We encourage you to explore these resources to better navigate this journey alongside your loved one.

<https://vbm.learnworlds.com/course/vbm-families-and-caregivers>



UPCOMING EVENTS

April 16 – Primary Care Providers:
*Family Health Teams, Community Physicians,
and Nurse Practitioners*

Dr. Morris Freedman will lead this session, offering family physicians and NPs insights into how VBM supports patient care in primary care settings.

DETAILS

DATE: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16TH, 2025

TIME: 2 PM-3 PM

LOCATION: ZOOM PRE-REGISTRATION
REQUIRED

(Click the link or scan the QR Code to
register today)

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/YtajwGTHSsGXaI1fQTGI0Q>



TORONTO REHAB PARTNERSHIP

In 2023, Baycrest partnered with Toronto Rehab to expand its VBM program. The Toronto Rehab VBM program is integrated with the Toronto Rehab's Specialized Dementia Unit (SDU). Like Baycrest VBM, Toronto Rehab VBM provides rapid virtual consultations and intensive case management for responsive behaviours in dementia. The team includes specialists from Geriatric Psychiatry, Nurse Practitioners, Pharmacists, Social Workers, and Behaviour Support Leads, delivering non-pharmacological and pharmacological treatments to support individuals with complex needs. Baycrest and Toronto Rehab work closely to deliver integrated Virtual Behavioural Medicine (VBM) services through a centralized intake and triage process, ensuring efficient prioritization of patients across CASS beds. The teams collaborate through biweekly meetings, research initiatives, outreach, education, and shared best practices.

TRI SPECIALIZED DEMENTIA UNIT (SDU)

The Specialized Dementia Unit (SDU) at Toronto Rehab is a 17-bed secure inpatient unit dedicated to assessing and treating behaviours associated with dementia that impact quality of life and LTC placement. With a strong focus on LTC, the team develops feasible, tailored care plans to support successful transitions back to LTC settings. The VBM team plays a key role in SDU admissions, assessing patients during virtual visits and prioritizing those who require inpatient care. After discharge, the VBM team continues to provide transition support back to LTC, ensuring continuity of care and long-term stability.

TORONTO REHAB VBM FOCUS

The Toronto Rehab VBM team supports older adults 65+ with dementia who are either living in long-term care (LTC) or transitioning from acute or complex continuing care into LTC.

NP-Led Support

Led by experienced Nurse Practitioners (NPs), the Toronto Rehab VBM team provides specialized care tailored to LTC environments. NPs are available by phone between scheduled follow-ups, offering guidance and assistance as needed. NPs reach out to gather key information about referred residents before the initial consultation.

Consultation Format

Virtual consultations are conducted via Microsoft Teams, with initial visits lasting one hour and follow-ups taking 20 minutes.

Impact

Between April and December 2024, the average time from referral to appointment was 17 days, with an average length of stay of 45 days. Additionally, about one-third of referrals are admitted to the Specialized Dementia Unit (SDU) for further support.

CONTACT

For more information and to access the referral form, visit: [Baycrest Virtual Behavioural Medicine \(VBM\) Program](#)

For program details and general inquiries, contact:
Rebecca Hillis – VBM Program Outreach Coordinator
rhillis@baycrest.org

REFERRAL

A Physician or Nurse practitioner can send referrals via fax 647-788-4883, or email behaviouralsupport@baycrest.org

For questions regarding a referral or the referral process, please reach out to the BSO centralized intake office
Toll Free: 1-844-785-2500
[Tel: 416-785-2500 ext. 2005](tel:416-785-2500)
behaviouralsupport@baycrest.org