

The Virtual Behavioural Medicine Program

Information for family members and caregivers

What is the Virtual Behavioural Medicine program?

The Virtual Behavioural Medicine (VBM) program is a partnership between the Baycrest Sam and Ida Ross Memory Clinic and Toronto Central Behavioural Support for Seniors Program (TC BSSP) which has grown in partnership with the Specialized Dementia Unit, Toronto Rehab, University Health Network.

The VBM program offers a short-term, behavioural medicine consultation service that supplements the work of local behavioural support teams. The VBM program is completely virtual; consultation is delivered by computer using a secured digital platform called the Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) or through Microsoft Teams.

There are 2 VBM teams: Baycrest VBM & Toronto Rehab VBM. The team to support the patient will be determined during the intake stage based on urgency, need, sector and suitability of programs.

Who is on the VBM team and what do they do?

The VBM team can include:

- Behavioral Neurologist
- Geriatric Psychiatrist
- Nurse Practitioners
- Neuropsychologist
- Registered Nurses
- Pharmacist
- Social Workers
- Behaviour Support Clinical Navigators, Service Navigator and Clinician Leader
- Medical Secretaries

The VBM team works together to help clients and families manage any severe, neuropsychiatric symptoms of dementia, also known as 'responsive behaviours.' One of the main goals of the program is to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions for those experiencing responsive behaviours.

How can the VBM program help someone with responsive behaviours?

The VBM program can help clients experiencing responsive behaviours, such as physical and verbal aggression, agitation, hallucinations and paranoia, and:

- Who are at risk of harming themselves, harming others, or both (examples include: wandering, risk of falls, resisting care, being unsafe with kitchen equipment, kicking, hitting, etc.)
- Who are medically stable

The VBM expert team focuses on using **medication** to complement other behaviour support strategies such as:

- Communication strategies – this can include validation, distraction, reassurance, etc.
- Environmental modifications – this may include changes to layout of the room, lighting, temperature, etc.
- Therapeutic and recreational activities and more, to reduce symptoms, and improve the quality of life for people living with dementia.

How can I have my family member or care recipient referred to the VBM program?

1. Any Doctor or Nurse Practitioner can refer your family member or care recipient to the VBM program.
2. Your family member or care recipient can also be referred to the VBM program if an application for admission to a specialized behavioural inpatient unit is being considered for them.

Who can take part in the VBM program?

The VBM program is available to help anyone referred to the program by a Doctor or a Nurse Practitioner who may be living in the community, retirement home, is in an acute care, post-acute care or rehabilitation hospital, or is living in long-term care. Your VBM team will be determined based on urgency, need, suitability and sector.

The program is also closely linked to care teams and the behaviour support teams involved with people living with dementia.

Who can I talk to if I have questions or need more information about the VBM program?

For more information about the VBM program, contact our Behaviour Support Coordinating office
Hotline at: Telephone: 416-785-2500 ext. 2005 or toll-free at 1-844-785-2500
Fax: 647-788-4883; Email: behaviouralsupport@baycrest.org

**The BSO Coordinating office and Hotline are open 7 days a week from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.
(Statutory Holidays excluded).**

Click [here](#) for the VBM website for additional information.

What should I expect after a referral is sent? How will a VBM appointment be scheduled?

1. When the referral form for your family member or care recipient is received, the VBM team will go over all the information.
2. Then, our Behaviour Support Clinical Navigator may call you, your Doctor /Nurse Practitioner for any additional information and assess the level of urgency. After this, the Navigator will process the referral and if accepted, the team will schedule an appointment.
3. If you are the primary contact listed for the appointment, once the appointment is booked, you will be contacted with:
 - VBM appointment date, time and length
 - Some general information on how to get ready for your virtual appointment
 - A link to take part in your virtual appointment.

Before the Appointment:

You should test the link before your appointment to make sure you will have a good virtual experience. If you are concerned about using technology for your appointment, as soon as possible before your appointment please contact:

For Baycrest VBM call 416-785-2444 or email VBMClinicAdmin@baycrest.org

For Toronto Rehab VBM call Clinic Admin: 437-994-0389 or email trvirtualbehaviourmedicine@uhn.ca

During the Appointment:

Please have ready a paper and pencil, and any communication aids (glasses, hearing aids etc.) for yourself and your family member / care recipient.

The Virtual Behavioural Medicine program: Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

Q: How long will a VBM appointment be?

A: The initial VBM assessment may take between 1 to 2 hours.

[NOTE: At Baycrest, if a physician trainee is taking part in the assessment, there may be a 15 to 20 minute break during the assessment. Baycrest Hospital is a teaching facility with the duty to teach the next generation of physicians for the care of older adults with neuropsychiatric disorders; as such, physician trainees are often part of the team.]

Follow-up appointments are about 15 minutes long.

Q: Who will be present at the VBM appointment and what should I bring?

A: A caregiver and/or staff member who is familiar with your family member or care recipient's medical history and behavioural history should be with you during the VBM appointment. Members of your BSO team will also be present during the appointment. Have a pen and paper ready to take notes and please wear your hearing aid(s) or glasses, if needed. Also, bring an updated medication list with dosages.

Q: How often will follow-up VBM appointments happen?

A: Follow-up appointments will be booked depending on your need and availability. The length of time between follow-up appointments is usually between 1 to 4 weeks. Follow-up appointments are done virtually using OTN, Zoom or Microsoft Teams. If you need support between your appointments, the VBM team will provide you with contact information during the appointment.

Q: What technology will I need to take part in a VBM appointment?

A: You will need:

1. A reliable, secure internet connection
2. A personal email account
3. A personal computer (with webcam, speaker, microphone and the Google Chrome internet browser) or a tablet or smartphone
4. A telephone where you can be easily reached in the event that that an internet connection cannot be established (if you are not using a smartphone for the appointment.)
5. A quiet environment.