

## The Virtual Behavioural Medicine Program

### Information for family members and caregivers

#### **What is the Virtual Behavioural Medicine program?**

The Virtual Behavioural Medicine (VBM) program treats people living with dementia who are at risk of harm to themselves and/or others due to behaviours associated with dementia. The interprofessional VBM team works in partnership with the person living with dementia and their care team (e.g., family, caregivers, physicians, nurse practitioners, social workers and community health care professionals). The treatment consists of pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions to address neuropsychiatric symptoms of dementia. VBM takes place through virtual visits over the secure Ontario Telemedicine Network, Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

The VBM program is delivered from Baycrest and from UHN-Toronto Rehab. All referrals to VBM are processed through one central coordinating office run by Behaviour Supports Ontario (BSO). Once a referral is accepted, it will be directed to the most appropriate VBM site clinical team based on clinical need, appropriateness, site preference selected by referring source, and site capacity.

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 CASS bed unit (including the Specialized Dementia Unit, Toronto Rehab, University Health Network and the Behavioural Neurology Unit, Baycrest).

#### **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
- Pharmacists
- Social Worker
- Occupational Therapist

- Behaviour Support Clinical Navigators, Service Navigators 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 care for people where they are and prevent unnecessary hospital admissions for those experiencing neuropsychiatric symptoms of dementia. However, if a hospital admission is deemed necessary, this will be discussed with the appropriate CASS program at Baycrest or Toronto Rehab.

### **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, in a retirement home, in an acute care, post-acute care or rehabilitation hospital, or living in long-term care. Your VBM team will be determined based on urgency, need, and suitability.

The VBM program is closely linked to care teams and behaviour support teams across the province of Ontario involved with people living with dementia.

### **How can the VBM program help someone with neuropsychiatric symptoms of dementia?**

The VBM program can help clients experiencing neuropsychiatric symptoms of dementia, 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 the room's layout, lighting, temperature, etc.

- Therapeutic and recreational activities, among other things, 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.

### **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 review 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](mailto:VBMClinicAdmin@baycrest.org)

For Toronto Rehab VBM, call 437-994-0389 or email [trvirtualbehaviourmedicine@uhn.ca](mailto: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.

**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](mailto: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 additional information on the VBM website.

**VBM E-Learning**

The VBM team has developed an interactive eLearning course that provides a basic introduction to the Virtual Behavioural Medicine program at Baycrest. It is designed for those caring for people living with severe and persistent neuropsychiatric symptoms of dementia. The eLearning course is available at no cost.

Click [here](#) to register for our FREE E-Learning course and learn more about VBM.

## 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 less than 30 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 the care recipient's medical history and behavioural history should be present 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 need and availability. The 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 participate in a VBM appointment?**

A: You will need:

1. A reliable, stable and 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 an internet connection cannot be established (if you are not using a smartphone for the appointment.)
5. A quiet environment.