



MENTAL HEALTH AND DISABILITY

Brain Health = Mental Health

CHALLENGE:

Mental and physical health are fundamentally linked. Global estimates indicate 15% of people live with disability (World Health Organization 2014) and that those living with chronic health conditions such as brain injury and dementia experience depression and anxiety at twice the rate of the general population. Brain disorders are expected to affect 1 in 3 individuals in their lifetime, and can have a devastating impact on the moods, emotions, behaviours and cognitive abilities of individuals. Patients in rehabilitation care often display responsive behaviours including agitation, resistance to care and aggression that interfere with their therapy and progress. Co-existing mental and physical conditions can diminish quality of life and lead to longer illness duration and worse health outcomes.



SOLUTIONS:

Toronto Rehab is a world expert in helping people overcome the challenges of disability, and poised to lead the discussion on mental health or “brain health.” We are home to the leading Brain Injury Rehab and Spinal Cord Rehab programs in Canada and also have expertise in addressing the full range of physical, mental, emotional and social issues associated with dementia. Our experts include:

- Dr. Ron Keren, a leading geriatric psychiatrist specializing in memory and Alzheimer’s also addresses the behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia.
- Dr. Abraham Sniderman, a renowned neuropsychiatrist is exploring the ways in which brain injury causes mental health issues.
- Dr. Robin Green, a national research Chair in Traumatic Brain Injury developing new scaled-up approaches to delivering therapies to patients across the province, while investigating how to advance brain health to improve mental health.

BEYOND OUR WALLS:

- Toronto Rehab is leading a national SCI-High Study to address gaps in hospital health care delivery for people with spinal cord injury. The study includes attention to emotional well-being and mental health, to develop best practice standards for needs assessment and care at spinal cord injury centres across the country.
- Toronto Rehab scientists have taken a proven treatment for depression and anxiety, adapted it, and demonstrated its effectiveness for people with severe brain injury. They have also shown that we can deliver it remotely making it possible to provide therapy to patients in their homes and communities.

VISION FOR A MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY AT TORONTO REHAB

A mental health strategy is currently being developed that will span across programs at Toronto Rehab's five sites, to support the recovery and chronic care management of individuals affected by conditions including traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, dementia and other complex illnesses. In order to build a dynamic centre of expertise, we will build capacity through:

- 1. Neuropsychiatry and Psychology Fellowship Program:** To train neuropsychiatrists and psychologists who will support current clinical demands and create a new generation of specialists in post-traumatic care and mental health in people with disability. By engaging the best and brightest young physicians, fellows support the work in our clinics while advancing important research studies in this area.
- 2. Clinical Care:** Our ability to provide the best rehabilitative care possible requires our frontline staff members, especially nurses, be equipped to handle patients with dignity and compassion. Training staff in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy teaches an understanding of negative behaviours and techniques to better manage challenging situations as they occur and to help deter escalation.
- 3. Patient Programs:** *Let's Connect* is a model in its early stages of development in our Spinal Cord Rehab program to deliver mental health early intervention services to patients as well as education workshops to clinicians and communities. Topics include managing anxiety, depression, adapting to changes in life post-injury, community re-integration, and aspects of mindfulness-based pain and stress management techniques.
- 4. Remote Treatment:** The Centre for Treatment in Chronic Brain Injury is using telehealth delivery platforms to maximize the scale and intensity of therapies for patients who have suffered from severe brain injury. Using the latest telehealth and pervasive computing technologies, Toronto Rehab is developing a model to deliver "environmental enrichment" therapies to patients in their own homes and communities, improving their mental health wellness and quality of life.
- 5. Innovating Environments and Care:** Mood and behavioural symptoms affect as many as 80% of patients with Alzheimer's disease. Toronto Rehab will change the landscape of dementia care by developing new interventions and innovative treatments for people with neurocognitive decline. This includes studying the influence of dementia-friendly design on mood, behavior, mental health and well-being.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

- Centre for the Treatment of Chronic Brain Injury \$5M
- Neuropsychiatry and Psychology Fellowship Program - \$1M
- Mental Health and Neurocognitive Disorders Research Fund: \$1M
- Mental Health in Rehabilitation Patient Programming and Innovation Fund - \$500,000
- Mental Health in Rehabilitation Staff Training Fund: \$150,000

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