

June 26, 2018

New service addresses opioid crisis

As accidental overdoses spike, there is new help for area residents addicted to opioids. The North Simcoe Muskoka Regional Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) Services opened on June 25 in response to the region's opioid crisis and provides people with substance issues quick access to professional help.

"The new regional RAAM Services will make it easier for individuals and their families to get the help they need when they are ready to make a change. It is unfortunate that it has taken a nation-wide opioid crisis to bring awareness to the magnitude and impact of addiction related problems," says Angela McCuaig, manager Outpatient Mental Health and Addiction Services at Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre. "But this investment into the system will make a significant difference to individuals and families who are impacted by substance addictions.

With funding and support from the North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) this new service includes three walk-in clinics in Barrie, Orillia and Midland. The Barrie Clinic, is located at RVH's Addiction Services at 70 Wellington Street West. The second clinic is offered in Orillia at the Common Roof at 169 Front St. S and the third clinic, in Midland, will open in July at the Chigamik Community Health Centre located at 845 King St.

"This new clinic comes at a time when RVH is seeing a startling spike in opioid drug overdoses," says Janice Skot, RVH president and CEO. "In fact, the number has increased five-fold over the past five years. Between April 2017 and March 2018 RVH treated 360 opioid overdoses compared to 67 in 2013-'14. This is not a clinic we want to open, but it is a clinic we need to open."

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit has just released new data which shows that between June 17-24, North Simcoe Muskoka hospitals saw 35 suspected unintentional drug overdose with 17 at RVH and nine at Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital (OSMH). This is about twice the number observed during the previous seven weeks.

"At these RAAM clinics we will provide a non-judgmental safe place for people to begin their recovery journey, and we will work with their primary care provider to support their recovery goals," says McCuaig.

No referral to the clinics or appointment is required so during RAAM clinic days people can walk in and have access to medication assisted treatment and counselling right away. During the initial phase of the RAAM Services, the Orillia clinic will be held on Tuesday from 1 – 3:30 p.m., Midland clinic, Wednesday from 9 -11:30 a.m. and the Barrie clinic Thursday from 9 –11:30 a.m.

The RAAM teams work closely with the Canadian Mental Health Association Simcoe County and Canadian Mental Health Association Muskoka Parry Sound branches to ensure individuals requiring ongoing counselling are offered these services.

For more information about RAAM Services call 1-833-797-3095.

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Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre is the largest hospital in the region of North Simcoe Muskoka serving a population of 450,000 residents. RVH's team of 430 physicians, 2,500 employees and 750 volunteers provides exceptional care and specialty services to almost half a million residents, including cancer care, stroke services, regional cardiac care, orthopedics, regional renal program, intensive care, regional adult and child and youth mental health and interventional radiology. RVH is focused on delivering high-quality, safe care that puts patients and their families first. For more information visit www.rvh.on.ca