

ALBERTA COLLEGE OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

Collaborative Mentorship Network (CMN)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | EVALUATION REPORT



Executive Summary

Introduction and Evaluation Approach

The Collaborative Mentorship Network for Chronic Pain and Addiction (CMN) was an initiative by the Alberta College of Family Physicians (ACFP) to connect diverse health care providers who are treating and supporting patients with chronic pain (CP) and/or substance use disorders (SUD) in Alberta. The CMN supported these health care providers with access to various professional development activities and resources such as mentors, evidence-based tools, and knowledge translation opportunities.

This is the final evaluation report for this initiative. From January to February 2023, Three Hive Consulting measured the advancement of the CMN's goals and objectives, the medium-term outcome achievements, and examined whether any changes resulted from CMN's work. The findings presented in this report conclude with suggestions for how the CMN could continue its activities after the end of its funding from Health Canada. Data was collected from the annual CMN member survey and interviews with self-selected CMN members.

Evaluation Results

1. CMN has helped members to form a professional network of like-minded practitioners.

Members have expressed that peer-to-peer learning activities like the mentorship program and workshops helped facilitate their professional learning and informed them of other resources. Most members said they did not have a robust network of colleagues in chronic pain and/or substance use disorders. This was often one of the chief reasons why members sought out the CMN and was seen as a major benefit to participating. In particular, the interprofessional aspect of CMN was viewed as a valuable factor to members' learning.

"Like, when a social worker talks about the cases he deals with, when a physician working in a pain management clinic talks about the issues he's dealing with, they are really useful. Because everyone is bringing in their expertise, the cases they have seen and the struggles they have seen with patients. So, it kind of connects the dots."

– CMN Member

2. Involvement with CMN has led to improvements in practice.

Participating in the CMN has equipped members with the necessary information and resources to make them feel more confident in their practice. In turn, this has led to an increased ability in members to share information with colleagues and patients about chronic pain and/or substance use disorders. As a result, many members have reported a positive impact on their practice. However, not all members have been able to improve their practice with what they've learned because of a lack of direct relevance to their practice or barriers to implementation at work.

"And the feedback that I get from patients is, 'You know this is the first time that I've talked to somebody about my pain. And I actually feel like I have been heard and understood.' So, I would take those as –strong indicators that the resources that I'm reaching into at the CMN are producing changes in my practice that are effective. Because there is no sort of systematic tracking and research that I'm doing ongoingly with my practice."

– CMN Member

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3. CMN has increased members' knowledge of chronic pain and/or substance use disorders.

Through the CMN, members have learned new things about chronic pain and/or substance use disorders, along with gaining a deeper knowledge in topics they already knew. The increase and/or confirmation in knowledge has led to members having greater confidence in their practice. In particular, members reported an expanded perspective on non-pharmaceutical treatments for patients.

"It's a huge life saver for not only me, but for [my work]. Because all the education there and then the supportive mentorship, like, 'Hey you are going in the right direction,' because the guidelines can be pretty grey, especially with the number of different diagnoses that we see."

– CMN Member

4. Most members reported positive experiences with the mentorship program but many also reported facing challenges with accessing the program or communicating with their matches.

Availability of matches continued to be a problem amongst members who participated or signed up to participate in the mentorship program. Those who were able to participate as a mentor or a mentee faced challenges because of scheduling issues or general unresponsiveness from their matches.

"The one [mentee] I had in [city], they just had some questions on some clients with addictions and chronic pain. So, I gave them lots of resources. And I was like, 'Anytime you need [something], reach out to me.' And they haven't reached out since. And I've done some check-ins and they're just saying they're fine. They're good to go. And then there was two I had that just didn't respond."

– CMN Member

Successful mentoring relationships resulted in increased knowledge, skills, connections, and abilities. Most participating members felt adequately supported by CMN.

5. Members would prefer that the CMN continue to offer educational content and resources in the form of lectures, workshops, and the website.

Many members expressed that they find a lot of value in educational content and resources like lectures, workshops, and the website that CMN offers and would like to see it continue. There was a preference for content that allowed members to interact and learn from one another.

"But to me clinically, I really enjoyed the mentorship program. And I really enjoyed listening to the forum presentations and looking up the resources when I need to. I know that this information is available to me on their website, I can always go in and have access to it. So, I hope that they - like it needs to be updated, obviously, because you need people that will keep updating that resource. So, I'm not sure how that's going to look if they don't have funding. But it's definitely valuable to me. I would like to see it continue, if possible."

– CMN Member

Based on the latest data, engagement in CMN's monthly Virtual Collaboration Forums (VCF) has increased. The most popular VCF since November 2021 was 'Innovations in Addiction Medicine.' Attendance for ECHO sessions, however, declined over time. The most attended ECHO event in the same period was 'Signs of OUD & Pearls to Manage Patients on Long Term Opioids.'

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6. Overall, members expressed their appreciation for the CMN and the team, as well as hope for the continuation of some CMN activities.

Some non-physician members also stressed that they would not have been able to access these professional development resources outside of CMN and shared that they hope the programming can continue.

"I just want to tell them that it was great. I did their evaluation. I think they did a really good job. I think it was a fantastic initiative, and so refreshing to see that initiative. Like, it was very hopeful; I did have a lot of hope to see that physicians' collaborative mentorship. It's just like, 'Yes, let's work together on this.' That just made my - like, I love it. I'm so proud to be part of it. And it's - darn, it's going. Now I'm all alone."

– CMN Member

Conclusion

- CMN has successfully supported health care practitioners of diverse backgrounds to grow their knowledge and improve their practice.
- CMN has been an overall positive experience for many health care practitioners and has allowed them to connect with each other and form a network that was not available outside of this programming.

Recommendations

- ✓ It is recommended that ACFP continues offering the website as a repository of resources, even if it cannot be updated with new content. Identifying ways for members to continue connecting and sharing knowledge without the support of an official staffing complement would be beneficial.
- ✓ It is recommended that ACFP continues to keep members informed of the future of its programming and invite suggestions for how to continue priority activities for the future.
- ✓ It is recommended that ACFP explore potential alternatives to the current funding in the form of partnerships with other organizations that could help run its programming.