

Integrating Physical and Mental Health Care for Individuals with Mental Illness: A Mixed Methods Study Protocol to Co-design and Test a Recovery-focused Lifestyle Intervention.

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Introduction

- The physical health of individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) is often overlooked and disparities exist in their access to essential health services.
- Individuals with SMI on psychiatric medications have a shortened lifespan of up to 25 years and the gap is widening.
- This inequity is due in part, to side effects of the medications and the lifestyle behaviours (e.g. substance use, physical inactivity, and sleep disturbances) that emerge as part of SMI.
- As a result, individuals with SMI are almost twice as likely to develop cardio-metabolic diseases, and these conditions account for about 70% of the early mortality in this group.
- Monitoring physical health, intervening early to reduce metabolic risks, and facilitating healthy behaviours are not standard practices within the provincial mental health system.
- Working closely with individuals with SMI to focus on wellness, health literacy and strategies for maintaining a healthy is key to improving physical and mental health outcomes.
- The purpose of the study is to plan, co-design and test a customized wellness intervention that addresses specific needs and features identified and prioritized by individuals living with SMI

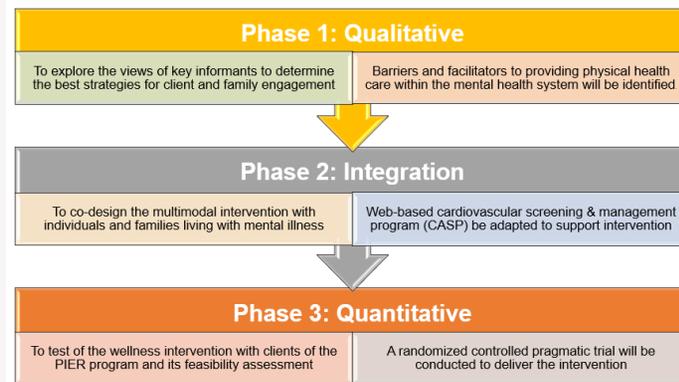
Study Objectives

- Phase 1 (qualitative): to explore the perspectives of key informants regarding barriers and facilitators to participation in a flexible wellness intervention for individuals with SMI.
- Phase 2 (integration): to integrate qualitative findings, best evidence, and the experiential knowledge of those living with SMI to co-design and create a contextually-relevant wellness intervention to meet their needs.
- Phase 3 (quantitative): to evaluate the efficacy and feasibility of the wellness intervention to reduce cardio-metabolic risk in individuals with SMI and improve their physical and mental health.

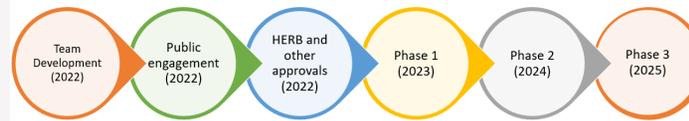
Methods

- This exploratory-sequential mixed methods study involves three phases (Figure 1).
- The participants in phase 1 will include key informants who work or have an interest in mental health including those living with SMI. In phase 2, individual and families will be the key for co-design. In phase 3, current clients (18 - 35 years) of the Psychosis Intervention and Early Recovery (PIER) Program of Eastern Health.
- Interpretative Description, a nursing methodology, will be used to guide the first two phases of the study. While quantitative analysis will be used for the third phase.

Figure 1: Study Design



Study Timeline



For contact: n6jm@mun.ca
References are available upon request

Patient Engagement

- The Mental Health and Addictions (MHA) Program of Eastern Health has a Patient and Family Advisory Council to help guide the work of the Program.
- Members of the Council share knowledge of the lived experience of SMI and are participants on various projects. The Council will provide two members for the research team.
- In addition, two clients of the PIER Program and one family member will join the research team. Lived experience members will have opportunity to participate in all aspects of the study.
- In particular, creation of the wellness intervention will be guided by individuals and families with lived experience of mental illness.

Knowledge Translation

- Study findings will be disseminated to participants in plain language summaries.
- The findings will be presented at meetings and published in scientific journals.
- Infographics will be prepared for policy-makers and health decision-makers in NL.
- The study team plans to partner with the new provincial health authority and provincial Department of Health and Community Services to help with knowledge translation in the mental health system.

Acknowledgments

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- We thank the community mental health agencies who participated in the community consultation related to the proposed study.