

## Disparities in Utilization of Psychiatry Services Among Home Care Clients

Authors: Jeffrey Poss, Lori Mitchell, Jasmine Mah and Janice Keefe



### THE SYNOPSIS

Analysis shows that over half of home care clients experience mental illness, and with that illness comes substantial and unique barriers to access diagnosis and treatment. Evidence highlights that clients in this sector who receive diagnosis and treatment for psychiatric conditions have better health outcomes and quality of life. However, significant disparities in service and treatment are evident not only between the two regions included in the study – Winnipeg and Nova Scotia – but also between the rural and urban settings in Nova Scotia. Home care services will be increasingly expected to help older adults with mental health conditions.

### HOW WE DID IT

Researchers took a sample of

**HOME CARE CLIENTS**



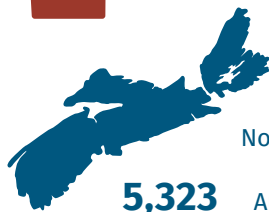
**60 yrs+**

between 2011 – 2013 and followed them for **four years**



**5,278**

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority



**5,323**

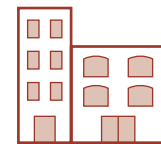
Nova Scotia Health Authority

Client information used included:

- Home Care Assessments
- Physician Visits
- Hospital Admissions
- Vital Statistics

These sources identified:

- Prevalence of psychiatric diagnosis
- Use of psychiatry services
- Location of access to services
- Disposition over the four year period – still home care client, transferred to nursing home, died.



**PRIMARILY URBAN CLIENTS**

in Manitoba (Winnipeg)

**URBAN & RURAL CLIENTS**



in Nova Scotia (Halifax, urban non-Halifax and rural)

### THE HIGHLIGHTS

- Mental health diagnoses was high among older adult home care clients and higher than found in the general population.
- While mental health diagnoses was found to equally high in both Winnipeg and Nova Scotia, there was a significant distinction between the number of psychiatric visits in WRHA than in NS – representing a four fold increase in the likelihood of accessing psychiatric supports among home care recipients.
- Referrals to mental health services are impeded by belief that condition is a normal part of the aging process.
- Senior population growth and shift to older adult care in the community will require home care services to increasingly help with mental health conditions.
- Availability of specialized services is a challenge for older adults with psychiatric diagnosis in rural areas.
- Study raised concerns and questions about differential access to psychiatry services by site of psychiatric visit (hospital vs. community) and geographical location (urban vs. rural).
- Proportional reluctance of older adults to use psychiatry services after a diagnosis.



## THE IMPACT

### of Improved Access to Psychiatry Among Home Care Clients

- 1 Older adults have better health outcomes and quality of life.
- 2 More attention is available for older adults with recurrent, persistent, chronic or late onset mental illnesses.
- 3 More attention helps older adults with chronic medical problems that can correlate with mental illness.
- 4 Where condition is progressive, seeing a specialist can provide options to manage related symptoms.

*“Loss of social connections are related to higher rates of depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems, these same problems are often under reported by patients and under diagnosed by clinicians.”*

*“In rural areas which represent the highest proportion of older people in their populations, responsibility for delivery of psychiatric care often falls to other services (e.g. emergency services) in the absence of dedicated mental health facilities.”*

## THE TAKEAWAY

**Mental health needs among older home care recipients is high** and access to psychiatry services is generally very low, particularly in NS.

There is an **immediate need for a mental health strategy** within public home care services.

Many home care clients who **could have benefited from psychiatrist visits** did not receive them.

**Access to psychiatry services differed greatly depending on whether you lived in Manitoba or Nova Scotia** – and in Nova Scotia, whether you resided in a rural or urban setting.



[View the full article >](#)

Poss J., Mitchell L., Mah J. and Keefe J. (2021). *Disparities in Utilization of Psychiatry Services Among Home Care Clients: The Tale of Two Canadian Jurisdictions*. September 2021, *Psychiatry* 12:712112. [doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2021.712112](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2021.712112)



## ABOUT

### The Home Care Pathways Project Overview

Understanding clients’ journeys through provincial home care systems is critical to providing good quality care. “How approaches to care shape the pathways of older adult home care clients” (or “Home Care Pathways”) is an interdisciplinary research project being conducted in Nova Scotia and Manitoba. The project draws on different methods and focuses on specific timeframes, in this article’s case we used existing client assessment and health administrative information. The Project’s goal is to understand how approaches to care shape client pathways of older adult home care clients with chronic and long-term conditions through the home care systems in the two provinces.

[nasca@msvu.ca](mailto:nasca@msvu.ca)  
[homecarepathways.ca](http://homecarepathways.ca)

