

Introduction

Maladjusted is a community play that was created and performed by patients and caregivers involved with the mental health system. The intent of the play is to stimulate a dialogue that leads to new understandings of the “mechanization” of mental health and “human centred care” and that those insights result in changes to behaviors that transform individuals, families, communities and system. Maladjusted is currently touring BC and Alberta. The play came to the Mount Waddington area on Feb 04, 2015 funded by the Mount Waddington Health Network. This report is meant to summarize the experience of the play and to take the interactions and solutions acted out on the stage by the community members and translate this into policy recommendations specific to the Mount Waddington Region.

The play was performed in Port Hardy and was attended by residents of the surrounding communities of Port McNeill, Port Alice, Sointula and Alert Bay. There were approximately 100 people in attendance.

Some of the recommendations that emerged from the dialogue created on stage included transparency, informed consent, and a client centred family focused system of care.

The Mount Waddington region encompasses Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Port Alice, Alert Bay and Sointula. Campbell River is the nearest major medical and city centre and it is located 286 kilometres south of the Mount Waddington area. Mount Waddington does not have a resident psychiatrist and Telehealth is relied on to connect patients/clients with the psychiatric services. It was identified in the audience dialogue that Telehealth is not the preferred method of service delivery.

Port Hardy has a cold weather shelter that is in operation for the cold weather months and a supported living facility for people requiring intensive mental health support. There is one designated psychiatric bed located in the Port McNeill Hospital. All other in-patient psychiatric services are located in Comox.

Recommendations

All levels of governance and policy makers

1) Increase public involvement in mental health policy and implementation

The richness of the dialogue that was created through this interactive theatre experience should be repeated each time that mental health policy and implementation is being assessed. A process for giving and receiving feedback needs to be developed as part of the quality assurance process.

BC Ministry of Health: Mental Health and Addiction Services, BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, Island Health Authority

2) Increase access to mental health care by:

- a. Recruitment of psychiatric services to the Mount Waddington area.
- b. Access to residential services including safe and secure housing in the Mount Waddington area so that residents do not have to travel out of their community and away from their supports to access services.
- c. Increase the number of mental health professionals in the Mount Waddington area to address waitlists especially for children and youth.
- d. Increase the travel budget for mental health outreach services to take into account outreach services to be provided to Port Alice, Sointula and Alert Bay.

3) Informed Consent– Policy makers to introduce the requirement for informed consent forms for referral agencies to be reviewed with the client and signed. This will help to ensure that people being referred to programs are well informed as to the structure and expectations of the program prior to being intake in the program.

In the play, Jack became very upset when being intaked at the program he had been referred to when he became fully informed as to what the rules and expectations of the program were. As a result he left the program without a plan, without his medication and without support. Through the dialogue that occurred in recreating the scene, this recommendation was formulated. The intent is to ensure people are well informed before entering a program which will in turn support successful treatment outcomes.

4) Policy that is specific to Mount Waddington – Regional management for Island Health to advocate for policy and procedures specific to the Mount Waddington area that acknowledges the remote working conditions, lack of specialist staff and the creativity of the current staff to meet the needs of patients.

Currently provincial policy does not always benefit service recipients in the Mount Waddington area. Because of the remote location and lack of professional staff such as psychiatrists and psychologists, some policies create a barrier to people receiving services in a timely manner or at all.

There are also instances where staff have been reprimanded for trying to meet the needs of the community and individual patients in the absence of required staffing.

The dialogue that occurred around this recommendation was that currently the Mount Waddington area is being "run by the mechanism" that is the health care system and that when concessions are made its a "quick fix" specific to an isolated situation and not a change to the system of how health care is delivered in this region.

Conclusions

At a local level, the community members and professionals who live and work in the Mount Waddington area are very knowledgeable regarding what is needed to meet the needs of the community. We are unique communities, each with its own set of challenges and successes. Success comes from policy makers recognizing the voice and expertise of the community. In moving forward the communities that make up the Mount Waddington area would like maximum input into policy development, allocation of resources, recruitment and retention of staffing and acknowledgement of the level of expertise held within this region.