

# Tertiary Mental Health Services Update

## Planning Update

In 2002, the provincial government announced the Riverview Redevelopment Project to phase out institutional care models at Riverview and replace them with smaller tertiary care facilities in each health region.

The transfer of tertiary mental health services to the regions provides VCH with the opportunity to deliver an integrated continuum of mental health care. This will add to the services available for clients who have serious and persistent mental illness, and allow VCH to incorporate new “best practice” care models.

As you’ll read in this update, VCH opened new services in 2007 and nine patients were moved from Riverview Hospital to TRU.

The development of other replacement tertiary mental health beds in the VCH region has been delayed because of gaps between capital funding and facility estimates, difficulties finding suitable sites and the completion of project reviews. VCH continues to work with provincial and local partners to find solutions and optimize the care available.

### Contact

For more information about the development of tertiary mental health services at VCH, please contact:

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## Trout Lake Tertiary Rehab Unit

The first transfers of long-stay clients from Riverview Hospital to the VCH region occurred in August 2007 with the opening of nine beds at the Trout Lake Tertiary Rehabilitation Unit (TRU) for people living with Self-Induced Water Intoxication.

TRU has 24/7 coverage by a health care worker and a nurse. It also has two peer support workers and a recreation therapist on staff. TRU is located in East Vancouver and clients are connected to the Northeast Mental Health team for weekly visits from a case manager, a physician and a psychiatrist. They also attend rehabilitation groups.

One of the aims of transferring clients from Riverview to local facilities is to help residents become better integrated into the community. There has been significant progress in this area.

For example, one client has a part-time job at the Coast Clubhouse and another volunteers at the SPCA regularly and is hoping to become an official ‘cat cuddler’.

Clients go on weekly outings to the bowling alley, enjoy the hot tub at the community centre and check out DVDs from the library. They are also involved with activities with Gastown Vocational Services, Kettle Friendship Society and Coast Foundation.

VCH Community Engagement worked with TRU staff to develop a resident and family involvement plan. As part of this plan, peer support workers interviewed residents to ask about the transfers and the new facility. Community engagement staff also sent a survey to family members on this subject.

The general consensus is that people are happy with the low patient-to-staff ratio and the home-like setting of TRU.

"It's more like home and part of the community. All the staff do their best and Mark\* feels more encouraged," said a family member. "We are very happy with his room and it's a real blessing to be so lucky."

Family members are welcome to visit TRU residents any time. TRU staff plan to organize regular opportunities for family members to meet TRU staff and share their views.

\* Not his real name



TRU staff Ben and Nathan.

## Self-Induced Water Intoxication

Self-Induced Water Intoxication (SIWI) was first noted in psychiatric patients more than 100 years ago. It is estimated that 3.5 to 5.0% of people with mental illnesses have some symptoms of water intoxication.

A SIWI client complains of being thirsty, and has a compulsion to drink. The most likely explanation for this is that the central nervous system has a problem regulating water balance.

If the behaviour is not controlled and electrolytes are depleted, it can lead to a life-threatening situation.

A SIWI client's weight is carefully monitored daily. If the client's weight increases over a set amount in a day, fluids are restricted for a short period until his or her weight returns to baseline.

## TRU Admissions

### Admission Criteria

- Between the ages of 19 and 65, with exceptions.
- Serious and persistent mental illness with behavioural problems requiring 24-hour supervision and professional care.
- May have chronic illnesses that are under control.
- Clients may be on Extended Leave under the Mental Health Act.
- May have concurrent addictions.

Client characteristics may include but are not limited to:

- Self-induced water intoxication symptoms.
- Episodic aggressive and/or impulsive behaviour.
- Recent history of disinhibited behaviour, requiring a safe, secure environment.
- Unsafe smoking behaviours.

Exclusion criteria:

- Clients whose medical conditions are acute or serious enough as to require an acute care setting.
- Clients who exhibit dangerous behaviour of a nature that cannot be safely managed and that puts other clients, staff or the community at risk.
- Clients who require frequent use of seclusion room or physical restraint.

All beds are filled at present. Questions about admissions should be directed to George Scotton, Manager, TRU at 604-658-1231 or [george.scotton@vch.ca](mailto:george.scotton@vch.ca).