



Mobile Outreach Street Health (MOSH)

Harm Reduction in Practice: Making Street

Health a Priority



In the August 2010 edition of the NSHEN Newsletter, Marika Warren described the Harm Reduction approach to health care, in particular its application to work with people engaging in high risk behaviours such as injection drug use or sex work. On a local level, the principles of harm reduction guide the work done by the staff of Mobile Outreach Street Health (MOSH), a relatively new program in Halifax-Dartmouth based out the North End Community Health Centre, supported by Capital Health and other partners.

MOSH offers outreach primary health care delivery, (nursing and occupational therapy with medical back-up), to individuals who are homeless, in shelters, or marginally housed, or whose lives are in chaos due to addictions, street life, or mental health issues. Many of the clients are seen in collaboration with agencies that also practise harm reduction, such as Mainline Needle Exchange. MOSH works with people in the moment, or over time, slowly establishing relationships of trust that enable change. A favourite story is that of Annie, (not her real name), who had been using IV opioids for many years and was developing new abscesses almost weekly. Although she saw her family physician regularly for management of her COPD, she hid the secret of her addiction from him. MOSH followed her for wound care, listening to her troubles, and talking up alternatives to her IV drug use. After more than a year of encouragement, Annie began methadone maintenance at Direction 180, (another harm reduction program), and her commitment continues!

MOSH was developed to provide health care to people whose needs were unable to be met by the regular health system, which is designed for the average person who can keep appointments, take their meds correctly, and deal with hospital routines. Many MOSH clients have experienced judgement, discrimination, and rejection when they've tried to access health care in hospital, at clinics and family practice offices, or at home. Their circumstances can be disconcerting, leading to fear and disapproval on the part of some health care providers. More important, when clients are deemed to be intimidating or undeserving, care can be denied or withdrawn.

MOSH endeavours to meet people where they are in life, conveying concern and respect, and accepting challenging situations. The team is finding that collaborating with other care providers while working with clients in common, is broadening the providers' understanding of clients' situations, and is helping to reduce barriers to care. The values of dignity, justice, equity, and fairness, reflected in the codes of ethics of most health professions, should inspire all who work in health care to recognize that they can be part of creative, safe solutions in ensuring better care for vulnerable, underserved people.

Monica Flinn RN, MSN

Mobile Outreach Street Health

North End Community Health Centre

If you would like to contact the MOSH Team, here are some helpful numbers:

Patti RN and Admin

802-9696

Rick RN 802-3332

Monica RN 802-1919

Becky OT 802-7785

How do I refer people to MOSH?

People do not need an appointment to see a member of the MOSH team. If specific information is needed to help the MOSH team with care of the person you are referring, please complete a referral form, available at www.nechc.com. Please fax referral form to 429-8319 and let patients know where and when they can find a MOSH nurse.

For the MOSH weekly schedule of visits to community agencies, please visit:

www.nechc.com

If you would like a copy of a chapter from one of these books, or if there is another article/chapter you would like to have, please contact us and we would be more than happy to get it for you! We also have a small library of books that are available for loan.

Our 2011 NSHEN conference on Ethics at End of Life was a fabulous success! The feedback that was received was positive and demonstrated just how much these events benefit everyone. We are really looking forward to planning for next year and we welcome input regarding potential topics at any time! For those who were unable to join us, please visit our website to view the presentations and articles. Thank you to everyone who participated.

Resources that you may find interesting.....

- Social Determinants of Health, Second Edition.* Michael Marmot & Richard G Wilkinson. Oxford University Press, 2006.
- The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger.* Richard G Wilkinson & Kate Pickett. Bloomsbury Press, 2009.
- The Status Syndrome: How Social Standing Affects Our Health and Longevity.* Michael Marmot. Henry Holt and Company, 2004.
- Just Health: Meeting Health Needs Fairly.* Norman Daniels. Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Justice and Healthcare: Selected Essays.* Allen Buchanan. Oxford University Press, 2009.

NSHEN: Coming Events...

April 20, 2011

**Policy Workshop. Quality Inn Airport Hotel
Enfield, NS. 8am-4pm**

This workshop will build upon the pre-conference policy workshop offered by NSHEN in 2010 by offering the opportunity for further, in-depth engagement with ethical aspects of policy review and development. The majority of the time will be devoted to hands-on activities and participant-directed discussion. A survey will be circulated to participants in order to fine-tune the activities for the workshop. Please see www.nshen.ca for more details.

May 17, 2011

(Note change from usual date)

**Telehealth Education Session, Halifax, NS
Health System Sustainability. 12pm-1pm**

Please check with your Telehealth Coordinator for the room location in your area.

June 15, 2011

**Clinical Ethics Consultation Workshop
Super 8 Motel, Truro, N.S. 9:30am-3:30pm**

This workshop will provide the opportunity for discussion, reflection, and practice with respect to the clinical ethics consultation (CEC) process, with particular attention to participants' questions and experiences. This workshop is designed primarily for those who completed the introductory NSHEN CEC Education and Training Workshop; however, others involved in CEC are welcome to attend. A pre-workshop survey will be distributed to facilitate workshop planning. There is no fee for this workshop. Please see www.nshen.ca for more details.

Questions? Comments? Want to join the mail list?

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