

# The Family Voice

What your Family Advisory Committee is doing for you **SEPT-DEC 2021**  
VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3

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## VISION

Family will be integral members of the recovery process and will be embraced by and actively engaged at all levels of the organization.

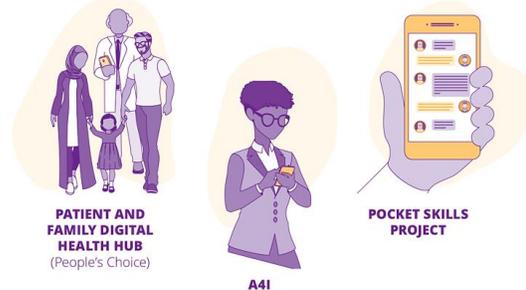
## MISSION

The Family Advisory Committee (FAC) is a partnership between CAMH staff and family members affected by a family member's mental illness and/or addiction. The CAMH FAC will engage with families, patients, community members and care providers to improve client care and enhance the experience of both patients and their families at CAMH.

## DEFINITION OF FAMILY

Any person or group of people someone identifies as belonging to their family or significant circle of support.

## INNOVATION EXPO



## Innovation Expo:

### Celebrating Innovation & digital transformation in mental health

The CAMH Innovation Expo is a Dragon's Den-style competition to encourage and celebrate innovative ideas that directly impact and improve the patient and family experience of care.

Participating CAMH teams pitch their ideas to a panel of judges for a chance to win a cash prize helping their idea become reality at CAMH.

CAMH Staff, patients, and families are involved in the competition process by selecting the top three teams who go on to pitch to the panel of judges.



### Hope by CAMH

The 2019 Innovation Expo helped launch Hope by CAMH, a free smartphone app that provides suicide prevention information, tools, and other crisis

resources to support and guide individuals when experiencing thoughts of suicide. Those who have thoughts of suicide can use the app to:

- Learn about suicide risk factors
- Create a personalized suicide safety plan
- Practice wellness activities

- Access crisis resources
  - Obtain information for family and loved ones
- One of the traditional problems with safety plans is that they are written on paper, easy to misplace, and not always accessible when you need it most. With Hope by CAMH, users have an easy-to-access app that can be key to maintaining a personalized safety plan, and serves as a reminder to check in.

Since its launch, the app has been downloaded 4500 times and has already been improved. It includes a robust set of tools and features, including mindfulness and relaxation tools, crisis resources, and even a journal for users to jot down their feelings. CAMH continues to research and evaluate the use and effectiveness of the app through surveys, testing, and interviews with app users. The Hope by CAMH Research Advisory Group includes patients, family members, and clinicians, who share ideas and feedback on all aspects of the research.

The app combines technology and clinical evidence to address deeply-rooted human issues, and delivers a uniquely human concept: Hope. For more information about the Hope by CAMH App, visit: <http://www.camh.ca/hopebycamhapp>



### A4i (App for Independence)

The Innovation Expo took place virtually in 2021, but that did not stop the twenty-one passionate and creative CAMH staff from competing

for a \$50,000 prize from Gifts of Light. This year's winner was a mobile app called A4i (App for Independence), an exciting digital innovation designed to support patients with schizophrenia and other psychoses in their recovery process.

The app features self-management tools, peer-to-peer support, and evidence-based content. A4i engages patients while also supporting their care team in monitoring wellness indicators and flagging risks. The app can be personalized with tools to reduce isolation, improve support, and generate patient insights.

Here are some of A4i's key features in more detail. For more information visit:

<https://www.a4i.me/>

- An anonymous peer-to-peer chat platform.
- **A sound detector.** Assists individuals with auditory hallucinations in an effort to separate hallucinations from real sounds.
- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) content.** Addresses living with schizophrenia, social activation, managing stress, anxiety, motivation, and cognition.
- **Medication and appointment reminders.** A4i offers virtual check-ins which can help patients stay on track and notify their care team when medications and appointments are missed.
- **Daily goal tracking.** Patients choose from preset goals or they can create ones for themselves. They can also ask A4i to help track their goals with an evening check-in.
- **Daily wellness check-ins.** Mental health and sleep quality is checked through a daily check-in and monitored for negative trends which can trigger email notifications to clinical staff.

A4i's evidence-based digital intervention has the potential to transform the way schizophrenia is treated and improve people's lives, living up to its name, App For Independence. Today, the app is designed to be used with clinician support, and is not available for public download. However, the team hopes to bring the app to patients at CAMH and other health care organizations in the future.

Hope by CAMH and A4i are brilliant examples of how the development of new digital tools will improve mental health care and accessibility for patients and families at CAMH. We cannot wait to find out what next year's Innovation Expo will bring to the experience of mental health and addictions care!

—Mary Beth Odell, mother, & Mara Jayenthiran, sibling, CAMH-FAC members

## Message from the co-chairs

As we look back on the last 18 months, the FAC is mindful that this has been an unprecedented moment in time that looks to be coming to an end. Over the past year, we are particularly grateful for

our partnership opportunities with the Patient Advisory Committee (PAC) which was formed in the fall of 2020, in the middle of a pandemic! We would like to congratulate them on their first year as a committee and look forward to working together as we share our commitment to patient- and family-centred care at CAMH.

As Rohan Mehta (Co-Chair of the PAC) explains: “The Patient Advisory Committee is a group of current and past patients representing the broader interest of CAMH patients to improve care and experience” In his leadership role with the PAC and as a person with lived experience of mental illness, Rohan knows first-hand the importance of patients and families working together: “During times of adversity and resulting mental health crisis, the emotional support that families (non blood relations very much included) are capable of providing is priceless and this can in turn facilitate favourable treatment outcomes. As such, families are often on the front lines of the battle to help their loved ones cope with the challenges of mental illness. Hence, the importance of our partnership with the FAC is more pronounced than ever as even more people grapple with severe mental health issues as a result of the ongoing global pandemic”.

The energy and commitment of the PAC is already having an impact on the committees they sit on at CAMH!



**FAC member list, 2020–21**

*Top, from left:* Susan Conway, John Im, Mara Jayenthiran, Pauline Lefebvre-Hinton, Miriam McCann, and Nicole Waldron.

*Front, from left:* Vivien Cappe, Gilda Martens, Thanisa Sundaralingam, Mary Beth Odell, Ashley Bowe.

The FAC is committed to partnering with them as both committees work towards our goal of enhancing the experience of the patients and families at CAMH.

—Susan Conway, mother, CAMH FAC co-chair & Ashley Bowe, sibling, CAMH FAC co-chair



## Meet the member:

### John Im

#### What drew you to the FAC?

Having experience with CAMH, I wanted to get a better understanding of the organization to contribute to meaningful improvements. I then started to look for opportunities to work with CAMH. I started volunteering as a research analyst for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) research and the impact of TBI to mental health and addictions. Along the journey I was introduced to the Family Advisory Committee which enabled even better insight into CAMH's organization and challenges along with mechanisms to positively influence improvements.

#### What's been the most rewarding thing you've done on the FAC?

From an FAC perspective we have advocated for strategic issues impacting patients and families. Information for patients and families along with communication have been top priorities (even more so during the Covid-19 pandemic). The most rewarding thing I have done is to advocate for revisions to the CAMH website with consolidated information for patients and families. In the next phase we have been working on a Frequently Asked Questions page for patients and families.

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## How long have you been supporting your family member?

I have been supporting my family member throughout this journey for over 10 years.

## The best advice from another caregiver?

The best advice to give to another caregiver is to empower yourself and your loved one with as much information as possible. Thus some of our top initiatives at the FAC include enhancements to patient and family information. Family is such an important part of the support network and it is that much more difficult with patients with no family (for a variety of reasons) while progressing through treatment.

## Your favourite pearls of wisdom?

As with the mantra, “Life is a journey, not a destination”, treatment of mental health is a lifelong journey and thus while addressing the issues of today keep an eye on the long term view.



## Self-care corner:

### Disconnect to Reconnect

Technology has been essential in keeping us connected to friends and family over the past year. We may feel even more attached to our cellphones now. They sit with us at the table, they walk with us and go to sleep with us. We worry if we can't find them and even take them to the washroom! Our attachment to technology is understandable, but there are times when it can be helpful to unplug. With a few mindful tweaks, technology can complement our lives, not rule them. Try designating “Phone Free Zones” and choose times that work best for you to unplug. Here are some examples:

**Dinner time:** Increasingly gone are the days of sitting around a dinner table chatting, sharing and enjoying every bite of our meal together. Eye contact is replaced with a focus on our phones, scrolling and reading text. Mealtimes can be a crucial ingredient to happiness and health. Family dinners are important rituals. Take time to stop scrolling and focus on each other.

**Nature time:** Being in the outdoors walking, hiking or running is not only good for our bodies, it can be good for our mood, mind, and relationships. Try taking this time to listen to your breath, smell the trees, and the chirps of the birds. If you are walking with a friend focus on each other and not the pinging of your messages. Use this time to lower anxiety and increase happiness. Let go of responsibility and give yourself a break. End phone walking and start nature walking.

**The bedroom:** Sleep is an important part of our physical and mental health. Many of us place our phones on the bedside table listening for the sound of a message and when our alarms go off we immediately start scrolling the news. Try turning off your phone and replace it with an old fashioned alarm clock. An hour or two before you go to sleep, read a book and relax and when you wake, take time to stretch and think about the day ahead.

Let's work together to make a human connection. Unplugging can be one place to start.

—Vivien Cappe, mother, CAMH-FAC member

## Spotlight Program: Workman Arts

For this issue we are spotlighting Workman Arts as a program that brings people together to reduce social isolation through the power of art. Workman Arts empowers artists with lived experience while challenging and advancing perspectives on mental health. I had the privilege to speak to Sara Kelly, Communications & Development Manager for Workman Arts about who they are and how art can positively impact and empower our loved ones mental health.

## What does Workman Arts do?

Workman Arts is a multidisciplinary arts organization that promotes a greater understanding of mental health and addiction issues through creation and presentation. We are an organization that recognizes that people who have struggled with mental health and/or substance use challenges may have missed opportunities to professionalize their artistic practice and we are a place where they can work on their craft and build their careers in a supportive peer environment.

## What can we share with our family members about getting involved?

If you believe that your loved one(s) might benefit from getting involved with Workman Arts, we welcome you to share the program information with them, referrals from a medical professional are not required. Often the first step would be to check out our website at [workmanarts.com](http://workmanarts.com). We encourage all of our artist members to make their own decisions about whether our program is right for them. We also have opportunities available to any artists who have received services from CAMH, such as our Being Scene exhibition.

## How can family members supporting someone with a mental illness and/or addiction to be involved?

The best way for families to get involved is to attend our public programs, such as the Being



**Photo credit:** Screen capture of panel discussion on mental health within immigrant communities following a screening of the film *The World is Bright* originally streamed: October 24, 2020

*Top from left:* Ying Wang, Film Director; Dr. Kenneth Fung, Clinical Director of Asian Initiative in Mental Health Program at Toronto Western; panel moderator Meghan Yuri Young; Bonnie Wong, Executive Director of Hong Fook Mental Health Association; lawyer Lawrence Wong, and ASL interpreter.

## WHERE ARE YOUR FAC MEMBERS?

### Internal committees and work groups

- Digital Health Steering Committee
- BrainHealth Databank
- Complex Care and Recovery (CCR) Quality Council
- Acute Care Quality Council
- Child Youth and Emerging Adult Program (CYEAP) Quality Council
- Clinical Quality Committee (CQC) of the Board
- Constituency Council
- Horizontal Violence, Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression Working Group
- Virtual Café Connection Planning Subcommittee of the FAC
- Communications Subcommittee of the FAC

### External committees and projects

- OFCAN (Ontario Family and Caregiver Advisory Network)
- Royal Ottawa SPOR Grant Focus Groups

Scene exhibition, the [Rendezvous With Madness](#) (RWM) festival and our regular showcases.

These events are open to all, whether they have a loved one who is a Workman Arts member or not. We have heard from members that attending these events and engaging in discussion has brought their families closer together and helped them understand one another better. RWM in particular sometimes includes stories that are told from a family member's point of view, which can help family members feel seen and supported.

## Are there any family-focused creative pieces?

One work from a family member's perspective is [Les mondes de Vincent](#) (The Worlds of Vincent). A documentary directed by Rozenn Potin about her brother, which was initially presented during RWM 2018 and more recently as part of a free film screening partnership with Hot Docs and Bell Let's Talk in the lead up to Bell Let's Talk Day

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2021. While not created as part of our training program, it is an example of the kinds of content that might be included in our public events that come from a family member's perspective.

—Gilda Martens, mother, CAMH-FAC member

## Reviews: Podcasts, Apps and More



**Headspace: Meditation & Sleep.** *Headspace Inc. Free to Download. Subscription Cost: \$12.99/month.*

**The Gist:** Headspace is a mindfulness meditation app that uses guided audio sessions. The app is available for iOS and Android, free to download, and its goal is to teach you the foundational aspects of meditation in your first 10 days of using the app.

**The Good:** I started using Headspace with no prior experience with meditation and I found the app's first 10 sessions, which are included in the "Basics" pack of guided meditations, were a perfect introduction to a mindfulness meditation practice. The daily nudges and reminders to practice helped me overcome an initial barrier: remembering and making the time to do it. A good night's rest is critical for my mental health, and I found using the app at bedtime helped me fall asleep easier.

**The Bad:** There is a fee to access the meditation sessions beyond the introductory "Basics" pack of 10. This cost can be a deterrent to many, especially when you consider there are other guided meditations sessions for free online and on YouTube. <https://www.headspace.com/>

— Mara Jayenthiran, sibling, CAMH-FAC member



**The Blind Stigma.** *Stacey-Ann Buchanan and Dr. Natasha Williams.*

*Free on Spotify and Apple Podcasts.*

**The Gist:** This podcast aims to provide a safe space that explores mental health within the Black community, breaking down the stigma that is attached and taking back our narratives.

<https://theblindstigma.com/podcast.html>

Stacey-Ann Buchanan was a part of CAMH's *The Mind Matters: Journey to healing*, conversation with Madame Sophie Gregoire Trudeau and fellow mental health advocate, Asante Haughton. You can watch the recording [here](#), where they discuss mental health, stigma in the Black community, and healing together.

— Nicole Waldron, mother, CAMH-FAC member



**Cleaning up the Mental Mess with Dr. Caroline Leaf.** *Dr. Caroline Leaf.*

*Free on Spotify and Apple Podcasts.*

**The Gist:** Dr. Caroline Leaf is a Cognitive Neuroscientist and author of the books *Cleaning Up Your Mental Mess* and *Switch On Your Brain*. <https://drleaf.com/pages/about-dr-leaf>

Her books and teachings are engaging and have been supportive to me. The Podcast is a great place to start and the book, *Switch On Your Brain*, is one of my favourites! It helped explain the connection between our brain and the connection to our mindset.

— Nicole Waldron, mother, CAMH-FAC member

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## Resources

**ACCESS CAMH** provides centralized information, intake and scheduling for most CAMH services, Access CAMH makes it easy to find the help and services you need with a single call. Access CAMH Family Line is **416 535-8501, press 2**, listen to the choices to the end, and you'll be connected.

For community resources on a wide range of topics, see: [www.camh.ca/en/health-info/guides-and-publications/community-resource-sheets](http://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/guides-and-publications/community-resource-sheets)

**CAMH FAMILY INFORMATION AND SUPPORT CENTRE** phone line is an information and support resource for CAMH families during COVID-19. It includes a recorded message on current CAMH policies and where to find more information on a variety of topics. Callers can also leave a message with questions about services and supports: **416-535-8501 ext. 33472**.

**FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE (FRC) at CAMH** has materials on mental health and addiction, resources and information on community supports and family-focused events. It is now in the RBC Patient and Family Learning Space, McCain Complex Care and Recovery building. Until COVID-19 restrictions lift, the FRC is open virtually 9:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., Monday to Friday. **416 535-8501 ext. 33202**  
Email: [family.engagement@camh.ca](mailto:family.engagement@camh.ca)

**CAMH VIRTUAL CAFÉ CONNECTION** is an informal gathering of CAMH friends and family members held the last Thursday of the month, 6:00–7:30 p.m.; call or e-mail for details to join virtually. **416 535-8501 ext. 33202**  
Email: [family.engagement@camh.ca](mailto:family.engagement@camh.ca)  
[www.camh.ca/families](http://www.camh.ca/families)

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAM FOR AFRICAN CANADIAN AND CARIBBEAN YOUTH (SAPACCY)** provides support and counselling to Black youth (ages 13–24) and their families who are dealing with substance use and/or mental health problems. Family members can self-refer for an assessment. For more information, contact Access CAMH at **416 535-8501, press 2** or **1 800 463-6273**

**ACROSS BOUNDARIES** provides community mental health and addiction supports and services and in-house programs that include individual and family supports, as well as a peer support group, men's group, women's group, community kitchen and more. Services are available in Caribbean dialects, Shona, Amharic, Harare, Xhosa, Afrikaans, Urdu, Tsonga, Swahili, Somali, Twi, Dari, Pashto, Farsi (Persian), Punjabi, Hindi, Bengali, Tamil and Mandarin. 51 Clarkson Ave., York **416 787-3007**  
[www.acrossboundaries.ca/](http://www.acrossboundaries.ca/)

**RECONNECT FAME FAMILY & CAREGIVER SUPPORT SERVICES** offers families ongoing monthly support groups and one-on-one support across the GTA. The groups are drop-in format and are facilitated by family support worker. FAMEkids and FAMEyouth programming available. **416 248-2050**  
[www.reconnect.on.ca/](http://www.reconnect.on.ca/)

**FAMILY OUTREACH AND RESPONSE PROGRAM, CMHA** offers educational information, programs, support services and referrals for friends and family of people recovering from serious mental illness. [toronto.cmha.ca/programsservices/family-support](http://toronto.cmha.ca/programsservices/family-support)

**MOOD DISORDERS ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO (MDAO)** provides information, resources and support groups for people with depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder, and for their families and friends. Services include WRAP for Families; drop-in groups and short-term professional counselling for families. **1 888 486-8236** or **416 486-8046**  
**416 486-8046 ext. 300** (line for family members of youth ages 14–35)  
[www.mooddisorders.ca](http://www.mooddisorders.ca) or [www.mdao.ca](http://www.mdao.ca)

**NATIVE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES OF TORONTO** offers children's mental health assessments and treatment (0–6 years and 6+ years), transitional support for women in domestic violence situations, women's and men's healing, family work, group programs (including Strengthening Families). 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Ninosche

program provides home support for ages 0–6.  
30 College St., Toronto  
**416 969-8510**  
<http://www.nativechild.org/>

**THE ONTARIO CAREGIVER ORGANIZATION** is an independent nonprofit dedicated to caregivers. **1 833 416-2273** for 24/7 helpline  
Online chat 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Mon. to Fri.  
[www.ontariocaregiver.ca](http://www.ontariocaregiver.ca)

**THE SASHBEAR FOUNDATION** offers Family Connections, an evidence-based 12-week group that meets weekly for education, skills training and support for people in a relationship with someone who has emotion dysregulation (e.g., borderline personality disorder). Groups are available across Canada.  
[info@sashbear.org](mailto:info@sashbear.org)  
[www.sashbear.org](http://www.sashbear.org)

**TROPICANA** provides culturally appropriate programs to youth, newcomers, people of Black and Caribbean heritage and others in need. Family supports include individual and group counselling and training for parents whose kids are in SNAP.  
1385 Huntingwood Dr., Scarborough  
**416 439-9009**  
[www.tropicanacommunity.org](http://www.tropicanacommunity.org)

## Family Resource e-Bulletin

The Family Resource Centre and Family Advisory Committee have partnered in launching a monthly Family Resource e-Bulletin.

**What to expect:** Family-focused resources and events, new issues of the Family Voice newsletter, Café Connection reminders, and more!

**Interested in subscribing?** Click [here](#) or email [family.engagement@camh.ca](mailto:family.engagement@camh.ca)

## Family matters

### We want to hear from you!

Family members—including relatives, partners, friends and co-workers—play an essential role in supporting the care and recovery of people living with mental illness and/or addiction.

Do you have an experience or story to share?

Do you have feedback about your experience at CAMH?

Your voice matters and we want to hear from you!

How to share feedback with CAMH's Family Advisory Committee (FAC):

- Phone: 416 535-8501 ext. 33202
- Email: [family.engagement@camh.ca](mailto:family.engagement@camh.ca)
- In person when COVID-19 restrictions lift: Family Resource Centre, now in the RBC Patient and Family Learning Space, McCain Complex Care and Recovery building. Hours will be 9:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., Monday to Friday.

### Would you like to receive new issues of the Family Voice Newsletter to your email inbox?

Scan the QR Code below using your smart phone camera and click the [link](#) to subscribe to our Family Resource e-Bulletin.



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