



Quebec is concerned with promotion and prevention in mental health

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Context

The promotion of mental health and the prevention of mental disorders and suicide are now a priority at the Ministry. Several structuring elements (laws, health monitoring systems, dissemination of national guidelines, access to expertise) are implemented to promote action on the determinants that affect mental health.

The Quebec Public Health Program 2003-2012 (2008 update) (QHP)¹ is one such element, which presents interventions for mental health promotion as well as mental disorder and suicide prevention. These interventions are multidimensional, i.e. centred on the individual, the community, public service and policies, and take several determinants into account.

Promotion and prevention in mental health

Intended for infants and their parents

Promotion and prevention activities in mental health developed for young children and their parents are multidimensional interventions that address various life aspects in this group, such as the Integrated Perinatal and Early Childhood Services (SIPPE) program for vulnerable families.

Other activities carried out by health professionals, namely family doctors, include case research, counselling pregnant women on alcohol consumption and recommending perinatal services to disadvantaged families.

Intended for children and adolescents

Promotion and prevention activities in mental health among school-age children are mainly carried out through the Healthy Schools approach, which is a comprehensive and coordinated intervention to promote the health and well-being of children and adolescents and to prevent social adjustment problems. Other preventive interventions are developed to fight sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, drug abuse and suicide.

In addition, certain youth-centred interventions can also impact their mental health. This involves interventions focused on preventing drug and alcohol abuse problems and legislative and regulatory interventions meant to limit access of alcohol to underage youth, and improve access to substitution treatments for users of psychotropic substances.

Communication campaigns are organized on a regular basis to promote children and adolescents' personal and social skills, and to prevent psychosocial problems that affect them such as violence, sexual abuse and mental health problems.

Intended for adults, the elderly and the general population

Promotion and prevention activities for adults, the elderly and the entire population include:

- an intervention aimed at reducing the use of anxiolytics, sedatives and hypnotics among people over 50;
- supporting the implementation of interventions that encourage moderation in drinking such as Alcochoix+;
- supporting the development and application of public policies as well as legislative and regulatory measures that aim to limit the negative effects of the following elements:
 - economic and physical accessibility of alcohol and gambling;
 - particularly harmful characteristics of certain games of chance;



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- supporting the development and application of legislative and regulatory measures that aim to restrict access to firearms;
- an intervention specifically aimed at suicide prevention:
 - raising awareness of the dangers that drugs and firearms kept in the home represent so as to restrict access to them;
 - establishing sentinel networks;
 - activities promoting appropriate treatment of suicide in the trivialization of suicide in the media;
 - supporting best practice guidelines in primary care for suicide prevention.

Other interventions are aimed at preventing problems that may threaten mental health or that are linked to mental disorders, including preventive clinical practices focused on alcohol consumption, domestic violence, sexual assault, depression and inappropriate use of psychotropic drugs among the elderly.

In the workplace

Particular attention will be given to interventions in the workplace, considering the prevalence of mental health problems. Experimental projects aimed at preventing mental health problems are in the works.

Surveillance, research, regulation and training

The monitoring of several mental health and mental disorder indicators is part of the surveillance activities associated with the population's health status. It is also essential to use research to make advances in knowledge regarding effective interventions in this area. The QPHP identifies the effectiveness of interventions aimed at strengthening protective factors for anxiety and depressive disorders to make the reduction of risk factors for these disorders an avenue of research.

Moreover, as indicated in Article 54 of the Public Health Act², the MSSS will be consulted during the development of an Act or regulation that could significantly impact the health and well-being of the population. In this context, aspects related to mental health are considered aspects of physical health.

Lastly, training activities are currently taking place for interventions already planned in the QPHP with regards to mental health, mental disorders and suicide. Other training themes for innovative promotional and preventive interventions may be added.

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Outlook

It is hoped that the promotion of mental health and the prevention of mental disorders and suicide will be addressed more thoroughly in the 2015 update of the QPHP as well as in the Mental Health Action Plan update planned for next year. It is expected that ministerial guidelines place increasing importance on maintaining positive mental health within the population. Interventions for promotion and prevention in mental health should also be based on diverse strategies targeting not only individuals, but also environments such as school, the workplace and the community. Finally, it is hoped that certain actions will target the reduction of social inequality in mental health to ensure that socioeconomically disadvantaged groups enjoy mental health on par with their more advantaged counterparts.

Bibliography

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2. QUÉBEC. (2012). *Loi sur la santé publique : LRQ, chapitre S-2.2*, à jour au 01 mars 2012. Québec : Éditeur officiel du Québec.