



CFMS
Canadian Federation
of Medical Students

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étudiantes en médecine du Canada



Canadian Medical Students Urge The Government of Canada to Strengthen Response to Indigenous Mental Health and Suicide Crisis

OTTAWA, FEBRUARY 12, 2018 – Future physicians from across Canada will meet with over 70 Members of Parliament, Senators and policy advisors today on Parliament Hill, to urge the government to strengthen its response to the Indigenous mental health and suicide crisis.

Three years after the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report, the health outcomes of Indigenous peoples in Canada remain intolerably poor. Suicide rates among Indigenous youth aged 15-24 are 5 to 6 times that of the general population of the same age; among Inuit youth it is 11 times higher.

Despite a clear need for urgent investment in mental health and suicide prevention, Indigenous peoples in Canada continue to experience some of the largest health and socioeconomic disparities in the developed world. Access to high-quality, culturally-safe mental health care remains limited in Indigenous communities.

As tomorrow's physicians and health care leaders, the medical students of Canada call on the government to urgently address the Indigenous mental health and suicide crisis in this country.

The Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) urges the Government of Canada to:

1. Adopt the frameworks and strategies put forward by Indigenous communities and peoples in Canada to guide the federal response to the Indigenous mental health and suicide crisis:
 - a. Adopt the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework as a framework to address First Nations peoples' mental health and suicide.
 - b. Adopt the National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy as a framework to address Inuit peoples' mental health and suicide.
2. Undertake a comprehensive review of the current distribution of funding through the National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy (NAYSPS) in collaboration with Indigenous communities, to ensure that every Indigenous community receives funding that is both sustainable and provided in accordance with need.
3. Direct Health Canada and Indigenous Services Canada to re-evaluate what programs and services are funded under the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program (NIHB), and:
 - a. Increase funding for preventative and land-based mental wellness programs that create opportunities within the community.

- b. Support and expand the list of approved service providers to include Indigenous traditional knowledge keepers.

The CFMS looks forward to working with the Government of Canada towards building a strong Indigenous mental health and wellness strategy that is responsive to community needs. This strategy should have culture as its foundation; foster community development, ownership, and capacity building; promote Indigenous self-determination; provide quality care and competent service delivery; encourage partnerships and collaboration; and ensure effective and efficient allocation of resources.

“Medical students from across Canada consulted extensively with Indigenous leaders and health experts in developing these policy recommendations,” says Charles Yin, MD-PhD student at Western University and National Day of Action Research Committee Chair. “Without the input of Indigenous communities this Day of Action would not have been possible.”

QUOTATIONS FROM THE CFMS:

“Three years after the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s final report, government action to address the Indigenous mental health and suicide crisis is well past due. As future physicians, we have a duty to advocate for the health of all Canadians. We sincerely hope to demonstrate a strong, meaningful, and respectful effort to advocate for Indigenous mental wellness as allies of the Indigenous peoples of Canada.”

- Henry Annan, CFMS President

“As medical students, we are advocates and allies in Canada’s reconciliation efforts. The CFMS underwent an extensive national consultation process with Indigenous leaders and experts in mental health and wellness, and built longitudinal relationships with multiple Federal Ministerial offices. There is a need for continued action and dialogue on Indigenous health issues in Canada, and for these to be addressed in Canadian medical education.”

- Yipeng Ge, CFMS Vice President Government Affairs

“As a Métis medical student, I could not be more proud of the steps that Canadian medical students and the CFMS are taking to better understand Indigenous health and knowledge systems. This is the first year medical students will address an Indigenous health issue on their annual Day of Action, but I am certain it will not be the last. I look forward to sharing the vision and goals put forward by Indigenous organizations and community leaders for fostering mental wellness, alongside other passionate Indigenous and non-Indigenous medical student allies.”

- Amanda Sauvé, CFMS National Officer of Indigenous Health (2016-17)

ABOUT THE CFMS:

The Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) is the national organization representing over 8,000 medical students at 15 medical schools across Canada. Tomorrow’s physicians leading for health today.

www.cfms.org

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