



MENTAL HEALTH AND HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM GUIDE

TRAINING REPORT FOR ONTARIO

MENTAL HEALTH AND HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM GUIDE: TRAINING REPORT FOR ONTARIO

Stan Kutcher, Yifeng Wei, Heather Hines

| Background

The Mental Health & High School Curriculum Guide (Mental Health Curriculum Guide) was developed by Dr. Stan Kutcher, Sun Life Chair in Adolescent Mental Health in collaboration with the Canadian Mental Health Association. Designed to support the teaching of mental health in grade nine or ten Canadian school curriculum, its objective is to enhance mental health literacy amongst both students and teachers. To support the Mental Health Curriculum Guide, a one-day training session (Mental Health Curriculum Guide Training Program) developed by Dr. Kutcher and Ms. Yifeng Wei (www.Teenmentalhealth.org) is offered to educators who will implement the Mental Health Curriculum Guide within their classrooms. The training addresses: the concepts of mental health; the mental disorders that typically onset in adolescence; stigma and help seeking efficacy for mental health problems and mental disorders and importance of positive mental health. The training addresses mental health within the educator's workplace context and reviews the six modules of the Mental Health Curriculum Guide, core and supplementary educational resources and teaching strategies pertaining to school-based mental health and the implementation of the Mental Health Curriculum Guide in the classroom. The objective of the training is to improve educators' knowledge of the Mental Health Curriculum Guide and its contents, enhance educator's knowledge of mental health and mental disorders, and enhance positive attitudes towards mental illness and those who are living with mental disorders.

An additional trainers workshop on the use of the Mental Health Curriculum Guide (developed by Dr. Kutcher and Ms. Wei) is conducted to prepare teachers and allied human health and services professionals (such as; guidance counselors; nurses; psychologists; mental health care professionals, youth workers) who have taken the initial Mental Health Curriculum Guide training program to become trainers for the program. This report presents the outcomes of the application of the Mental Health Curriculum Guide training delivered to educators from the school boards recruited by the Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Services and the educators attended a one-day training session in Whitby, Ontario on September 17th, 2013.

| Participants

In preparation for implementing the Mental Health Curriculum Guide within classes in Ontario, training sessions were provided to educators and allied professionals within the school and community. Specifically, a one-day session was provided to 74 teachers and educators. Of these original 74 participants, 46 surveys matched for analysis (10 male, 34 female, 2 unknown), and make up the basis of this report. Training was offered on September 17, 2013. The sessions were conducted by Dr. Stan Kutcher of the Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health Team, of the IWK Health Centre and Dalhousie University and Teenmentalhealth.org and Yifeng Wei, research associate with the Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health team. The training focused on the basic concepts of mental health and mental disorders, a review of the six modules of the

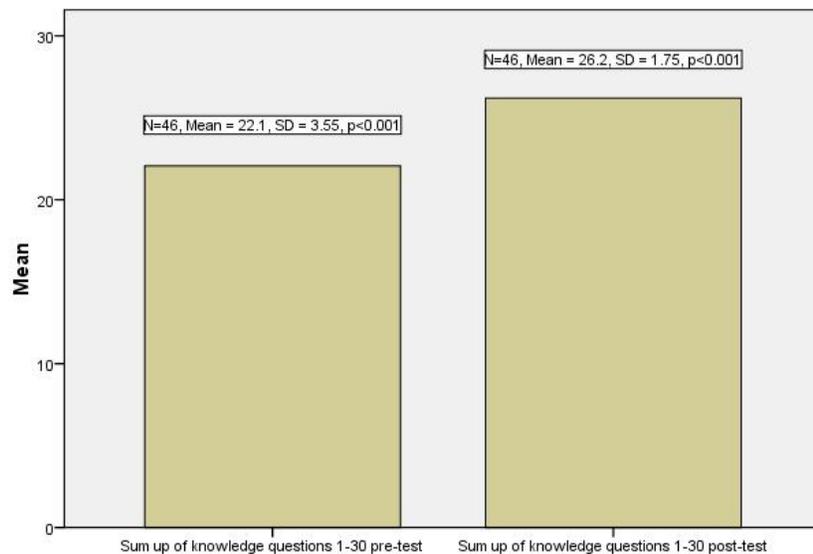
Mental Health Curriculum Guide, and discussions of teaching strategies and teaching materials that could be used in implementation of the Mental Health Curriculum Guide. Some participants were not classroom teachers but professionals in the field of mental health and employed with the various school boards in Ontario. Most of the educators taught Healthy Living, Physical Education, or worked in Guidance/Student Success in junior high and secondary school.

| Outcomes

A total of 74 individuals completed the training program. Of these 74, 46 pre-training and post-training tests were matched for analysis. Participants in the Mental Health Curriculum Guide training completed anonymous knowledge assessment surveys before and after the training in order to help determine the effectiveness of the training. Surveys included 30 knowledge questions, 22 pertaining to general mental health literacy and 8 related specifically to the Mental Health Curriculum Guide. These questions were framed as “True”, “False”, and “Do Not Know” options. Participants were instructed to use this “Do Not Know” option rather than guessing. The survey also included eight questions examining attitudes related to mental illness. These questions were measured with a 7 point Likert Scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. For the attitude survey, a total positive attitude score out of 56 was calculated. To assure anonymity participants were asked not to provide any identifying information. In order to link participants’ responses between the pre-training and post-training surveys, anonymous linking questions were asked, such as their month of birth, mother’s first name, and postal code. Participants also completed an additional satisfaction questionnaire allowing them to provide qualitative feedback regarding their satisfaction with the training.

Outcomes of the knowledge assessment survey reveal that prior to the training, as a group, the educators correctly answered an average of 22.1 of 30 (74%) of general mental health questions correctly, which improved to 26.2 of 30 (87%) following participation in the training program. This is a highly statistically significant change, $t(45) 7.85, p < 0.001$ (see Figure 1), demonstrating a highly significant training result. The analysis also showed an effect size of $d=1.48$. This is an extremely high effect size, demonstrating a highly substantive training impact.

Figure 1: Mean of Scores on General Mental Health Knowledge Survey



The participants' attitudes towards mental illness were found to be very positive at baseline (see Figure 2). Their attitudes prior to training averaged 50.65 out of a possible score of 56 (SD=4.2) which increased to 51.91 after the training (SD=4.7). This positive change was statistically significant, $t(45) = 2.33$, $p < 0.03$. The effect size ($d = 1.26$) also indicates a strong positive change of attitudes.

Fifty-one participants provided feedback regarding their satisfaction with the training. Using a five-point Likert scale (i.e., 0 = poor; 5 = Excellent), participants responded to several questions and were invited to provide comments and suggestions. When asked "Overall, I found the workshop useful and informative" participants' average score was 4.58 out of 5. In response to the question "Overall I found the speaker(s) to be of high quality" as a group participants' average score was 4.68 out of 5. In response to the question "Overall I learned information and concepts that will be helpful to me in my work", as a group, participants' average score was 4.68. When asked "would you recommend this workshop to my colleagues" as a group participants average score was 5. When asked to provide an overall rating for the workshop as a group participants' average score was 4.38 out of 5. Finally, participants were asked to rate this workshop compared to other similar workshops they have taken. 26% of respondents noted that the workshop was "much better" than similar programs while 45% stated it was "better".

Overall, participants considered the training session to be "excellent", "very informative" and as providing "relevant information". The participants enjoyed the speakers and thought the information learned was relevant to their work. Some representative comments from their written feedback include:

"Great, user-friendly resources that can be easily integrated with any course."

"Some extremely interesting material. Outstanding expert on material."

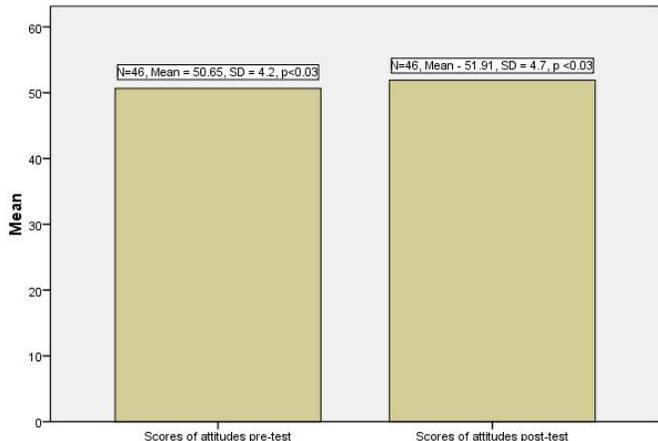
"User friendly resources are always a bonus. PowerPoint presentations were simple enough for all students to understand, relate and appreciate"

"Relevant. Excellent information explained in a manner that was easy to understand. Good strategies and resources for classroom education (for both the teachers and the students)."

| Discussion and Conclusions

Evaluation of the educators training on the Mental Health Curriculum Guide for the Ontario school boards demonstrates that such training is helpful to significantly and substantially improve educators knowledge regarding the Mental Health Curriculum Guide and its contents, significantly and substantially improve their knowledge regarding mental health and mental illness. The Mental Health Curriculum Guide training also had an impact on decreasing stigma in participants, even in this group of educators who had pre-existing strongly positive attitudes towards mental illness and the mentally ill.

Figure 2: Mean Group Scores for Attitudes Regarding Mental Illness



These highly positive results help to set a strong foundation for Ontario area school boards to be able to embed mental health literacy into the school curriculum through the application of the Mental Health Curriculum Guide and additionally provides a cadre of trained trainers who can meet ongoing school board training needs and support teachers in the classroom as the curriculum is applied.

| References

Wei, Y., Kutcher, S., & Szumilas, M. (2011). Comprehensive school mental health: an integrated “school-based pathway to care” model for Canadian secondary school. *McGill Journal of Education*, 46(2), 213-230.