EVALUATING THE IMPACT
OF A GERIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH MODULE ON THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND PRACTICE OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PROVIDERS

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WHY THIS MATTERS

Older adults with mental health concerns are cared for across every sector, often by providers outside of mental health.

20% experience anxiety or depressive symptoms they find difficult to cope with[1]

15% of community-dewlling older adults have depressive symptoms[2]

6% of older adults have an anxiety disorder[5]

11% of older adults report alcohol misuse[6]

A comprehensive geriatric assessment (CGA), considered the gold standard of care for older adults, addresses older adults' psychosocial and mental health needs alongside their medical, cognitive and functional needs[4]. As tools and practice vary, providers need the skills to recognize mental health concerns to connect them with the appropriate care[7], yet providers outside of psychiatry report limited preparedness and confidence in their ability to address their client's mental health concerns[3].

THE TRAINING

- **Goal**: The goals of the **Provincial Common Orientation to the Care of Older Adults** (PCO) are to increase awareness, improve knowledge, enhance skills and change practice.
- **Format**: Hybrid model of online content in learning portal and weekly 90-min virtual facilitated sessions.
- **Content:** 27 topics within 25 modules over 11 weeks aligned with the CGA assessment domains from The Interprofessional Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment Competency Framework to ensure topics reflect the key clinical areas required for high-quality CGA practice.
- **Audience**: Health and social care providers (HSCP) working with older adults. Over 1400 providers have attended since January 2023 across 11 Cohorts.
- **Co-developed by**: HSCPs & leaders with iterations from learner input.

METHODOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

Identifying the Gap
Depression had been a part of the Delirium, Dementia and Depression module but the participants and faciltators had identified the need to expand the mental health topics to include anxiety, suicidality and substance use.

Creation
In July 2024, the expanded mental health module was developed based on a literature review, the **Canadian Coaltion of Seniors' Mental Health Clinical Guidelines** and in consultation with providers working in mental health.

Further Development
In Spring 2027, the voice of the older adult and care partner perspective will be added to this module.

REFERENCES

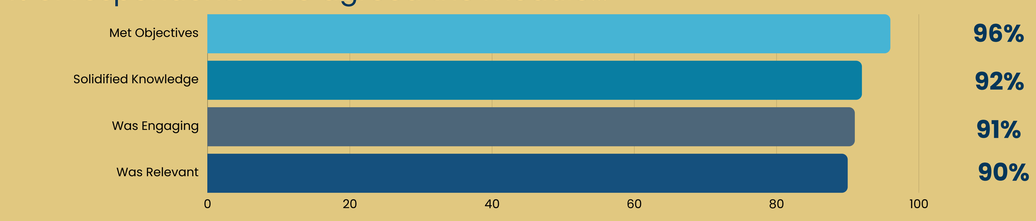
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RESULTS

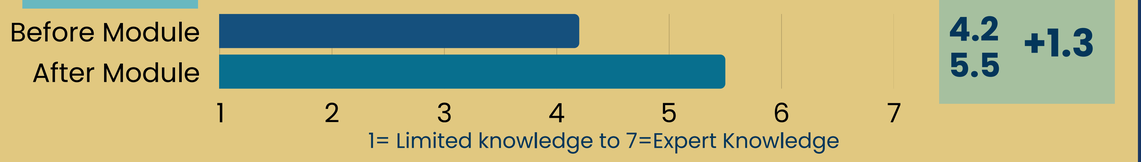
Impact Methodology
Impact was measured with a retrospective pre/post self-rating of knowledge (7-point Likert), module ratings and content analysis of open-text responses to planned practice changes. **857 providers** from the last six cohorts (Sept 2024 - June 2026) received the new expanded mental health module and impact data is based on a **71% Response Rate.**

Participants
At registration, learners self-rated their knowledge of all 27 course topics. Across the 4 cohorts with this baseline data, suicidality and substance use consistently ranked 2nd and 3rd lowest of all topics while depression and anxiety ranked mid-range.

Learner Experience
% of respondents who agreed the module...



Knowledge Gains
80% of respondents rated their post-module knowledge higher than at baseline on a 7-point rating scale



When asked about future learning, learners who wanted more on mental health, asked for greater depth on treatment, application in their own setting and guidance when mental health concerns overlap with dementia

Planned Practice Changes
Learners described the following ways in which they planned to use the information from the module**:**

Developing Clinical Expertise
Enhancing mental health assessment by use of screening and assessment tools, recognizing signs and symptoms, differentiating the 3 D's, encouraging a holistic approach to care. Greater confidence discussing sensitive topics using non-judgmental communication.

Becoming an Aging Care Ambassador
Changing ways of communicating, educating, advocating and influencing others around them by challenging stigma and assumptions, promoting person-centred care and sharing knowledge with others.

Becoming an Aging Care Advocate
Supporting better coordination, referrals, access to care and system level responses, by earlier identification, strengthening access to services and advocating within systems.

CONCLUSION

A guideline-informed mental health module improved self-rated knowledge in the topics learners knew least about and inspired planned practice changes at the clinical, team and system levels. Structured, guideline-informed education is a scalable way to strengthen geriatric mental health capacity across sectors, aligning with the conference's goals of innovation, policy integration and system-level impact.