



*Your Mind Matters:*  
**An African Nova Scotian Youth Education  
Project**

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# INTRODUCTION

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There is a paucity of research regarding access and pathways to care for EIS for ethnic minorities in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2013).

The Mental Health Commission of Canada has identified a need to improve our understanding of mental illness within our diverse populations.

Psychotic disorders, including schizophrenia, are among the most serious of all medical conditions in terms of personal suffering, disability, and cost to society.



# INTRODUCTION

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Black patients admitted to psychiatry are more likely to be diagnosed with psychosis than other patients in both Padua and Montreal (Jarvis, Toniolo, Ryder, Sessa & Cremonese, 2011).

Black patients were more likely to have police involvement and less likely to have GP involvement on their pathway to care at the time of first episode psychosis (Anderson, Flora, Archie, Morgan & McKenzie, 2014) .

Black-Caribbean group experiences increased likelihood of being referred to Early Intervention Services from an inpatient admission, decreased likelihood of GP involvement on the pathway to care, and least total contacts (Anderson, Flora, Ferrari, Tuck, Archie, Kidd & McKenzie, 2015).



# NOVA SCOTIA EARLY PSYCHOSIS PROGRAM

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The study I am discussing today was conducted at the Nova Scotia Early Psychosis Program (NSEPP).

NSEPP aims to reduce treatment delay for African Nova Scotian youth who develop psychosis throughout the province of Nova Scotia.

To support this goal, they are expanding upon an existing community education initiative called *Because Your Mind Matters* (BYMM), which was launched in October 2013.

While implementation of *Because Your Mind Matters* has been very successful, it is recognized that a gap exists within *Because Your Mind Matters* resources for culturally appropriate education materials on early phase psychosis to reach African Nova Scotia youth.

## **STUDY PURPOSE**

To create culturally appropriate community education resources to enable young African Nova Scotian youth to recognize early warning signs of psychosis, and to encourage them in looking after their own mental health and that of their peers..

# STUDY OBJECTIVES

To examine perceptions and beliefs about mental illness and specifically psychosis, among African Nova Scotian youth in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM).

To examine perceptions and beliefs about help-seeking among African Nova Scotian youth in the HRM.

To examine the barriers and opportunities experienced by these youth in seeking help for psychosis and other mental illnesses.

To obtain feedback on the preferred content and format of educational resources and other educational activities that should be developed to educate these youth, their families, and their communities about psychosis and other mental illnesses, promote self-care, encourage help-seeking and reduce stigma around mental illness.

# RECRUITMENT AND SAMPLE

Youth in recovery and their caregivers in the Nova Scotia Early Psychosis Program.

Youth, caregivers, community leaders and service providers in Dartmouth North.

Youth, caregivers, community leaders and service providers in North Preston, East Preston and Cherry Brook (the Prestons)

Youth, caregivers, community leaders and service providers in North End Halifax



# DATA COLLECTION

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14 focus groups with 75 participants



# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Perceptions and beliefs about mental illness among African Nova Scotian youth reflect the perceptions and beliefs in the broader African Nova Scotian community.
- The African Nova Scotian community tends to avoid the topic of mental illness or deny its prevalence in the community.
- There is a considerable lack of knowledge and understanding about mental illness.
- African Nova Scotians are brought up to be self-reliant and strong, which make it difficult for them to reach out for help.
- A fear of police involvement in their care contributes to a reluctance to seek help and a dismissal of the gravity of mental health concerns in the African Nova Scotian community.
- For many youth, self-medication in the form of drugs and alcohol is used to cope with mental health struggles.
- There is a long history in Black communities, including African Nova Scotian communities, of relying on the church and religion to address emotional and mental health struggles.
- There is a general lack of trust in the health system, as well as a lack of comfort with health providers.
- The lack of cultural competency demonstrated by mental health professionals is a significant barrier to help-seeking among youth.

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO & ENHANCING OPPORTUNITIES FOR HELP-SEEKING AMONG AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN YOUTH.**

- Creating a list of Black health and mental health professionals that can be provided to youth.
- Advocating for the hiring of an African Nova Scotian mental health advocate in the health care system.
- Offering training and education to church ministers and other spiritual leaders about ways to support people with mental illness.
- Partnering with community organizations to provide referrals to mental health services.
- Identifying key young Black leaders or initiatives that can help spread the word about the need to seek help for psychosis and other mental illnesses.
- Setting up a 311 African Nova Scotian help line.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

### SHARING INFORMATION & PROVIDING EDUCATION ON PSYCHOSIS & OTHER MENTAL ILLNESSES TO AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN YOUTH & THEIR FAMILIES

- Developing partnerships with African Nova Scotian groups, churches, health programs at schools, universities, and other organizations in the community.
- Forming a youth advisory committee that can organize and hold educational sessions on psychosis for youth.
- Forming a group comprised of African Nova Scotian mental health professionals, youth workers, and individuals from Nova Scotia Health that can hold sessions on psychosis and mental health in African Nova Scotian communities.
- Providing opportunities for African Nova Scotian youth to design their own mental health campaigns.
- Developing creative tools to share information about psychosis, such as an app, videos, plays, art, music, and television ads/educational commercials and, finally,
- Sharing information about psychosis and other mental illnesses in the African Nova Scotian community through *Bell Let's Talk* and other media campaigns.



**MY NEW BOOK**

***FROM THE ENLIGHTENMENT TO BLACK  
LIVES MATTER: THE IMPACT OF RACIAL  
TRAUMA ON MENTAL HEALTH IN BLACK  
COMMUNITIES***



**Thank  
You!**

A 3D graphic of a blue sign with the text "Thank You!" pinned to the top with two black pushpins. The sign has a white border and the text is in a bold, sans-serif font. The word "Thank" is on the top line and "You!" is on the bottom line. The sign is slightly tilted and has a soft shadow underneath.