

May 3, 2019

Ms. Lisa Lapointe,  
Chief Coroner, Province of British Columbia  
Office of the Chief Coroner  
Metrotower II  
Suite 800-4720 Kingsway  
Burnaby BC V5H 4N2

**RECEIVED**

**MAY 14 2019**

**CHIEF CORONER**

Dear Ms. Lapointe:

Re: BCCS Case File #2016-0380-0010

Thank you for your letter of March 19, 2019, concerning the recommendations of the Coroner's Inquest into this death. We agree with the recommendations and this is an important focus on our work to create a more robust system of care for individuals with concurrent disorders.

The recommendations have been reviewed by our Mental Health and Addictions leaders at Vancouver Coastal Health, and will be collaborating with the Ministry of Health and other health authorities to consider how best to address the issues. The following outlines our actions as they pertain to the recommendations. We would be pleased to provide additional detail or discuss further.

**To: The Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, in collaboration with the Health Authorities and BC Centre for Substance Use:**

**1. Implement a standard practice of care in addressing addiction and addiction recovery.**

*Pursuant to the Coroners' Death Review Panel recommendations from 2018, Vancouver Coastal Health established a Regional Addictions Program to address targeted efforts in addressing addictions and addiction recovery.*

*The Regional Addictions program has a number of initiatives specific to standardizing care across the Health Authority, including:*

- *Disseminating and incorporating into our MHSU and Addiction Services the revised Opioid Use Disorder Guidelines and the new Alcohol Use Disorder Guidelines published by the BC Centre for Substance Use (BCCSU)*
- *Working with our partners, to build addiction treatment capacity within primary care and in acute care/Emergency Departments*

- *Providing oversight and expansion of Rapid Access Clinics like DTES Connections and the Rapid Access Addiction Clinic at St. Paul's Hospital*
- *Updating Schedule A contract language for VCH-funded programs to ensure those programs are providing evidence-based treatment including provision of Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT)*

*The VCH Addiction Program also actively participates in quality improvement efforts, including escalating concerns around recovery centres to the BCCSU and Overdose Emergency Response Centre (OERC) to ensure a provincial response where appropriate.*

*Currently The Vancouver Coastal Health Regional Program for Mental Health and Substance Use is also pursuing funding to support the establishment of academic leadership in concurrent disorders in order to develop and promote evidence-based best practices.*

**2. Offer addiction recognition training and continued education in addiction medicine to all health care professionals.**

*The Vancouver Coastal Health Authority Regional Mental health and Substance Use Program, and Regional Addiction Program are co-leading the development of a regional strategy for persons with concurrent disorders. A large component of this strategy is providing an understanding of gaps in education and knowledge regarding addiction medicine and treatment, and providing recommendations for enhancing competency for staff across VCH, including assessment and recognition of both substance use and mental health concerns.*

*The VCH Regional Addiction Program is also:*

- *Working with BCCSU to invest strategically in addiction medicine training for prescribers (GPs and NPs) and allied health staff*
- *Funding fellows who will become leaders in addiction medicine in their practices and communities*
- *Funding staff to complete the BCCSU's Provincial Opioid Addiction Treatment Support Program (POATSP), including funding 2-week clinical rotations for key practitioners who complete the POATSP course so they can get hands-on experience with other addiction medicine experts*
- *Working with the Divisions of Family Practice and Primary Care Networks to increase the addiction medicine skills of GPs, including FFS GPs*
- *Recently started an OAT Prescribers Network with monthly Community of Practice call-in education sessions*

*The Regional Addiction Program and Regional Mental Health and Substance Use Programs are also working with hospitals across the region to:*

- *Implement better screening and assessment in EDs and on hospital wards*
- *Provide evidence-based care including OAT*
- *Develop referral pathways from acute care to community-based addiction treatment*
- *Creating outreach teams to link people to care and to support those who are struggling to stay engaged and retained in treatment*
- *Working with newly created Urgent Primary Care Centres to incorporate evidence-based addiction, and concurrent disorders medicine*

**To The Last Door Recovery Society, and All Health Authorities in the Province of British Columbia:**

- 3. Re-examine the importance of mental health treatment in regards to addiction recovery, and to make available mental health services on-site to support clients.**

*Vancouver Coastal Health has a number of initiatives across the Communities of Care working to better integrate mental health and substance use services, including co-location of mental health and substance use/ addiction teams at our community health centres, alongside primary care and public health.*

*The Vancouver Community of Care is undertaking a review of its Mental Health and Substance Use Teams to ensure standardization and education for all staff for both mental health and substance use concerns.*

*A recent review of Tertiary services indicated the minimally 60 – 70% of individuals in inpatient units struggle with severe concurrent disorders. In response to the review, VCH is looking to enhance early intervention services, and augment treatment approaches on our units to better serve the concurrent needs of clients.*

*The Regional Addiction Program is working with the Province of BC around Bill 16's changes to Assisted Living Regulations that improve standards in both Supportive Recovery and Mental Health assisted living facilities, as well as, re-hauling our withdrawal management system to align with evidence-based best practices*

*For VCH contracted agencies (in Vancouver) VCH has an in-reach nurse who can assess anyone who is presenting with mental health symptoms. The nurse will reconnect clients back with their MH team or send them to the Access and Assessment Centre (AAC) to get an assessment if necessary. Vancouver Community contracted agencies also have a physician attached to each site who can make recommendations about a client's MH needs.*

We trust this provides a helpful summary of action underway. Please let me know if we can provide further details.

Yours sincerely,



Mary Ackenhusen  
President & Chief Executive Officer

cc: Yasmin Jetha, VP, Community Services, VCH  
Dr. Patty Daly, VP, Public Health & Chief Medical Health Officer, VCH