

SSCHS Summary of interview data re gaps in health services on SSI February 2019

Between November 2018 and January 2019, five Members of the Board of the SS Community Health Society conducted semi-structured interviews with 28 residents of SSI selected because they are well connected within the community and were felt to have a pulse on health and wellness issues on the island. The interviews ranged from half to one hour in length. The questions asked about their reaction to the arrival of four new GPs on the island, any remaining gaps in health care on island, what suggestions they had to address these gaps, what changes would improve the overall health of islanders and what they would change or create if they could. Responses were merged to form a summary report. This is the start of a larger process of engagement with Salt Spring Island Residents to identify the major remaining gaps in health care on the island.

Reaction to the new GP's

The response was strongly positive in that most who want a GP should now have one and patient loads should be more manageable, allowing for faster appointments and a reduction in the need for inappropriate ER visits.

Continuing concerns:

Given the history of GPs leaving SSI, sufficiency of GPs on the island still feels vulnerable. Some GPs are nearing retirement and one new GP has already left.

Remaining gaps in health and community services

Mental health/drug abuse/ homelessness issues:

Gaps: - Insufficient access to timely/affordable mental health and addiction counseling, follow-up; outreach; non-crisis care; youth and gero-psychiatry services

Need:

- a comprehensive Community Mental Health plan/strategy
- ongoing and more robust support for mental health and substance abuse
- multidisciplinary team to provide psychiatric and general medical outreach and followup

Gaps in Preventive health and wellness care, lack of health education

Need:

- A comprehensive program of preventive health care and health education
- Culturally sensitive peer support for specific problems
- more youth services, especially around ecological health (smoking, drugs, bullying)
- more support for men, similar to SWOVA
- enhanced sexual health services
- Health Education, eg regarding nutrition, exercise, mitigation of environmental toxins, specific disease self-management

Gaps in specific medical services:

- insufficient on-island specialist services
- insufficient affordable PT/OT, acupuncture/chiropractic care, vision / hearing services
- lack of pharmacy or dietician consultation services
- no access to free or reduced-fee dental care for the poor/uninsured
- insufficient MSW and health navigation services

Need:

- Funding for a full time health navigator (an individual who assists residents to navigate complicated application systems and connect with needed services).
- Significantly expand specialist services including gerontology, dietary, dental and pharmacology, through both in-person and Telehealth modes

Gaps in Seniors care, complex care, and End of Life care issues: inadequate support for seniors, people with multiple complex health needs, and the dying.

Need:

- enhanced support for vulnerable seniors, especially those still living independently
- More Nurse Practitioners
- Enhanced palliative care services; more in-home hospice care
- more on-island long term care beds
- More foot care

Gaps in Maternal, child, and family care:

Need: - more support, including postpartum care, for struggling single parents

Issues around Models of Care:

- Current fee for service system inefficient, doesn't utilize multidisciplinary health team
- no separate walk-in clinic, especially for after-hours care

Need:

- Systematic identification of desired health outcomes on island, and a quality improvement program to assure these are being met
- A Community Health Center that is:
 - a) Centrally located
 - b) Non -profit, community driven and responsive to the community
 - c) provides a team approach integrating services both in & outside the center; multidisciplinary, holistic, including mental health, alternative care, outreach; triages to most appropriate professional for the problem
 - d) Offers services that specifically address inequities in health
 - e) is a "wellness center", free to all, and acts as a hub for social supports
 - f) works collaboratively with existing services on island
 - g) provides Health Navigation and access to health information