

LESSONS FROM THE "NON-CRITICAL" PATIENT DURING A PANDEMIC: DEVELOPMENTAL-BEHAVIOURAL PEDIATRIC POPULATIONS & COVID-19

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Seemingly overnight, in March 2020, the world was turned upside down by the global SARS-CoV 2 (novel coronavirus) pandemic. As COVID-19 affected all aspects of clinical care, Canadian ambulatory clinics for any service deemed "non-urgent" or "non-critical," were suspended for several months. When outpatient care slowly resumed during the summer and fall of 2020, the backlog of patients in these areas and subsequent requests for follow-up significantly outpaced the number of available appointments. In fact, it became apparent that certain patients' needs had grown in unprecedented ways during the pandemic, even though their issues had previously been given low priority during the acute crisis period. Among these groups were youth with underlying mental health conditions, those with chronic but non-life-threatening illnesses, and the subgroups seen in Developmental-Behavioural Pediatrics. In Montréal, they were among the least likely to have their needs met as the waves of COVID-19 moved through the community, and many still struggle to find relevancy in the discussions about the hidden impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, even one year later.

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What can the experiences of these marginalised youth teach us about what our system labels less relevant care in the context of an acute health care crisis? A short narrative presentation will demonstrate insights gleaned from 2020 & early 2021 to underscore the often unrecognised challenges faced by these populations and their families. ■