

New research supports youth with mood and anxiety disorders

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75% of mental illnesses emerge by age 25. Mood and anxiety disorders are among the most common conditions, yet there is little support for youth in this age group. A new study from Lawson Health Research Institute shows that may no longer be the case.

Dr. Elizabeth Osuch, Lawson researcher and a psychiatrist at London Health Sciences Centre, heads up the First Episode Mood and Anxiety Program (FEMAP), a treatment and clinical research program geared specifically to youth ages 16-26. Traditionally, youth can only access these specialized services through a physician referral, but FEMAP allows potential patients to refer themselves. Dr. Osuch believes this could help professionals to better connect with those at risk, and to intervene before the young person's development is impacted.

In a new study released last month in *Early Intervention in Psychiatry*, FEMAP could be a valuable alternative. After reaching out to local secondary schools, medical centres, and community agencies to raise awareness, FEMAP's health care delivery research study enrolled 93 patients in their first year. Each participated in an interview and questionnaire to assess the severity of their symptoms, their level of functional impairment and their demographic information.

Results showed that 67% of patients referred themselves. More importantly, almost 71% had received some [mental health treatment](#) in the past, but still showed severe [symptoms of depression](#) and/or anxiety, and substantial functional impairment. This suggests that outreach and

easy access can help meet the needs of the youth population, such as that provided through FEMAP's direct access and age-specific program.

"It is our belief that adolescents and young adults should not meet any obstacles when they reach out for mental health care because the odds are just too high. If a young person has to wait 6 to 12 months to get the [mental health care](#) they need that could ruin a semester or year of school or their early work life," says Dr. Osuch. "That would have a seriously detrimental effect on their developmental trajectory and that's why we at FEMAP wanted to see if easier access would be an appropriate and useful model for youth mental [health care delivery](#). Our findings suggest that it is."

Provided by Lawson Health Research Institute

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