



## A GP for Me in Squamish and Whistler

The Sea to Sky Division of Family Practice is a non-profit group of family physicians practicing primarily in Squamish and Whistler. We are committed to improving primary care in our communities. We are working with Vancouver Coastal Health and local community partners on A GP for Me to help more residents get access to primary care and stay in the best possible health.



## Learning About Local Primary Care

Through 2014, we consulted with local social service agencies, doctors and health care partners to learn more about our local health care needs. Here are some of the key challenges we identified:

- ▶ Mental health and substance use is a major concern, particularly among youth
- ▶ About 21% of residents do not have a family doctor, and just over 2,000 people are looking for a doctor
- ▶ There are emerging concerns around the capacity of community supports and urgent care for mental health and substance use patients
- ▶ The high cost of living in the region increases the challenges of recruiting permanent physicians to live and work here



## Addressing Our Challenges

Together with partners, the Sea to Sky Division has set out three A GP for Me strategies to improve primary care services in our community, and to help more people get access to the care they need:

- ▶ Connecting doctors and patients from priority populations: mental health and substance use, youth, people without a GP
- ▶ Improving access to mental health and substance use supports
- ▶ Enhancing primary care settings

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## About Our Communities

- ▶ Includes Squamish and the Resort Municipality of Whistler
- ▶ Population of 27,359 (17,535 in Squamish, 9,824 in Whistler) <sup>2</sup>
- ▶ Population expected to exceed provincial growth rate next 20 years <sup>3</sup>
- ▶ Increasing seasonal/transient populations

## A GP for Me

A GP for Me is a joint initiative of the Government of BC and Doctors of BC. It aims to:

- ▶ Increase the capacity of the primary care system to improve patient access to services
- ▶ Help more patients who want a doctor to find one and improve support for vulnerable patients
- ▶ Strengthen doctor-patient relationships to improve patient health

1. Ministry of Health. Attachment by Age/Gender by LHA, 2012–2013.

2. BC Stats. 2013. "Population Estimates."

3. BC Stats. "Population Projections."



British Columbia Medical Association



# A GP for Me: Projects in our Community

## Finding Doctors for Priority Populations

We aim to match more patients with family physicians through three projects that increase awareness of the importance and availability of family doctors.

- ▶ **Campus Attachment Clinic** established at Quest University in Squamish to address the primary care needs of resident students and match them with family doctors.
- ▶ **An online A GP for Me directory** to provide the public with accurate, timely information about family doctors accepting new patients.
- ▶ **A public awareness campaign** to help patients learn about the value of patient-family doctor relationships and how to best access care.

## Improving Mental Health and Substance Use Supports

We are working to improve access to existing supports for patients with mental health and substance use issues.

- ▶ Pilot a **Patient Resource Navigator** position to help doctors better navigate treatment and support options for their patients and their families.
- ▶ Pilot **part-time after hours coverage** to provide on-call support to patients in crisis within the community.
- ▶ **Enhanced mental health and substance use training**, with an emphasis on youth, to support doctors and other providers to care for these patients.

## Enhancing Primary Care Settings

We are working to support doctors in their practices, helping them grow their capacity to take new patients, and increasing time available to spend with existing patients.

- ▶ **Practice optimization and training for family practices** to improve efficiencies and the use of Electronic Medical Records.
- ▶ **Development of an online resource and referral tool** of medical and non-medical patient supports in the community, as a shared resource for doctors and other health care providers.

## Timeline

