

## **Nanaimo Division of Family Practice Teams Up With Community Partners To Launch Social Prescribing Program Advancing Senior's Health in Central Island**

NANAIMO, BC - February 19, 2025 - The [Nanaimo Division of Family Practice \(NDFP\)](#) is proud to share the success of its pilot Social Prescribing Program, an innovative initiative aimed at reducing social isolation and improving health outcomes for seniors aged 55 and older.

Family Physicians and Nurse Practitioners in Nanaimo can refer any eligible patients aged 55 and older to the Social Prescribing program. Once accepted, patients are connected with either an Island Health Link Worker or an NFLA Community Connector, who assesses their needs and connects them with community-based services and activities tailored to enhance their well-being.

Through a collaborative effort with [Nanaimo Family Life Association \(NFLA\)](#), [Island Health](#), [Vancouver Island University \(VIU\)](#), and [The City of Nanaimo](#) and funded by [Shared Care](#), the program takes a holistic approach to supporting seniors facing loneliness, depression, food insecurity, chronic illness, and other social determinants of health.

According to the [Canadian Institute for Social Prescribing](#), one in four Canadians over 65 live alone, and nearly 50% of Canadians over 80 report feelings of loneliness. Research suggests that reducing loneliness and depression, while improving health-related quality of life, could lead to nearly \$23 million in annual mental healthcare savings and \$1.7 million in reduced primary care physician visits.

Kirsten Schuld, Project Lead for the Social Prescribing Program, has seen firsthand how vital social support is for seniors in need.

“Since launching the program last May, we’ve witnessed remarkable transformations in the lives of our seniors. Some hadn’t left their homes in years and are now attending regular social events, forming new friendships and rediscovering a sense of purpose.”

VIU is hosting a free community event, [Social Prescribing in Nanaimo and The Connection Cure](#), on Sunday, March 2, at Bowen Park Complex. The event will be a unique opportunity to explore the benefits of Social Prescribing with renowned author and journalist Julia Hotz. Hotz’s work has been instrumental in advocating for community-based health solutions and the power of human connection in improving well-being.

Following the keynote presentation, attendees will have the opportunity to participate in a Q&A session with a panel of Social Prescribing changemakers, gaining insights into how the program is transforming lives in Nanaimo.

Joanne Schroeder, a VIU Recreation and Tourism Professor and chair of the World Leisure Organization (WLO), emphasized that collaborative efforts like the Social Prescribing Program are vital to improving community well-being.

“We have to stop seeing health promotion programs such as recreation, parks and trails, sports, and arts and culture as the first to be cut or eliminated. The data being collected from social prescribing is showing us that these programs are more than just beneficial; they are essential,” she said.

“If we shift our perspective on health promotion—delivered by the nonprofit sector, clubs and organizations, faith groups, and public recreation—and see them as contributing to community solutions, we recognize them as very important. When properly supported, they serve as pillars of well-being, reducing loneliness, increasing physical activity, fostering community connection, and improving overall quality of life.”

By supporting seniors in aging at home, Social Prescribing reduces hospital admissions, emergency visits, and ambulance calls—ultimately improving quality of life while saving an estimated [\\$268 million per year](#) in healthcare costs.

For more information or to determine eligibility for Social Prescribing, please talk to your primary care provider to learn more about the program.

---

### **About The Nanaimo Division of Family Practice**

The Nanaimo Division of Family Practice is a non-profit organization representing Family Physicians, Locums, Hospitalists, Emergency Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, and Family Medicine Residents in Nanaimo and surrounding areas. Their mission is to build a healthier Nanaimo by recruiting, supporting, and empowering primary care providers to deliver accessible, culturally safe, and high-quality care. Learn more: <https://divisionsbc.ca/nanaimo>

### **Media Contact**

For more information, media inquiries, or to schedule an interview, please contact:

Morgan McGuire | [morgan@solaracreative.ca](mailto:morgan@solaracreative.ca) | 905-251-1429

Andrea Bava | [andrea@blitzme.ca](mailto:andrea@blitzme.ca) | 778-908-1764