



44%
Percentage of population with 1 or more chronic conditions



27%
Percentage of population with depression/anxiety



23%
Percentage of population that are seniors

Improving Ongoing Care for High-Risk Patients

The Powell River Division of Family Practice represents and supports doctors to improve our health care. Our members are specialists, family doctors, and nurse practitioners. There are 35 divisions in the province.

Our community survey found that many patients are accessing the Emergency Department when they do not have a family doctor.

As part of our work on the provincial *A GP for Me* initiative, our goal is to improve the care for everyone in our community. We do this by working to support doctors in their work, improve care for high-risk patients, increase the number of doctors in our community, and develop a community health resource database.

A GP for Me is funded by the Government of BC and Doctors of BC.

Having a primary health care provider is important for everyone because it improves health. It is especially important for people who are more vulnerable and have chronic conditions. There are many people at high-risk in our community.

Our community survey showed that many patients who do not have a family doctor—particularly those with chronic conditions—access primary care through the emergency department (ED). The ED is not the best place for care, especially for patients who need ongoing care. To support better care for these patients, the Division and Vancouver Coastal Health are piloting a new program to refer patients with chronic conditions to a nurse practitioner.

Nurse practitioners can order and interpret diagnostic tests, make medical diagnoses, prescribe some medications, perform specific procedures, and refer to medical specialists. A visit to a nurse practitioner is similar to visiting a family physician.

Improving continuing care for high-risk, vulnerable and complex patients is part of our ongoing efforts to advance family medicine and improve patient care and population health in Powell River.

Risk and Vulnerability Factors

Both internal and external factors can contribute to vulnerability and risk.

Internal risk factors include:

- Increasing age
- Female gender
- Medical comorbidities
- Substance abuse
- Mental illness
- Cognitive impairment
- Sensory impairment
- Impairment in activities of daily living
- Malnutrition

External risk factors include:

- Lack of social network
- Dependence on a care provider
- Living alone
- Lack of community resources
- Inadequate housing
- Unsanitary living conditions
- High-crime neighborhood
- Adverse life events
- Poverty