

Palliative Approach to Care for Workers who Support People who are Homeless in Canada

Understanding the Context of a Person Experiencing Homelessness and How it Can Affect Their Care

People who are homeless have a different experience than the average patient that health care providers see. Please take the time to review the impact these experiences may have had for your patient.

If the person has no housing or unstable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• He/she/they may not have a health card• It might be difficult to get a hold of him/her/them• They are not always in safe or trusting sleep conditions; it is not uncommon for personal belongings to be stolen by others, especially prescription drugs or other medications
Mistrust of health care providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The person may have had previous negative encounters with health care providers and may be skeptical of receiving help from health care
Experience with trauma (physical, sexual, psychological abuse, racism and colonization)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The person is likely to have experienced trauma in his/her/their life that can have an impact in a variety of ways, including how he/she/they interact with authoritative figures or people in positions of power• Past trauma experience may bring out behavioural issues including violence, etc.• It is important to work with the person to keep him/her/themselves and those around safe
Nature of social support network and how it may differ from the average patient	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The person may not have friends/family around to offer support• The person may suffer from loneliness
Mental health and other co-morbidities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The person may suffer from illnesses that are not yet diagnosed• The person may suffer from other illnesses that impact how they perceive pain/symptoms/wellbeing
Addictions and substance use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The person's current or previous narcotic use may impact how he/she/they feels pain• The person's use may alter how effective typical medications are• The person may be at risk of going into withdrawal if forced to abstain from alcohol or drugs