

Self-Injurious Behaviour (SIB) Clinic BCCH Outpatient Psychiatry Department: Referral Process

Background

Children with neurodevelopmental disorders, such as autism spectrum disorders, typically with moderate to severe intellectual disability, have a high rate of self-injurious behaviour (SIB). SIB in these children has a different pattern to self-harm (i.e. cutting), typically seen in mental health services. SIB in children with neurodevelopmental disorders presents at a younger age and has a different typography (e.g. head banging).

The BC Children's Hospital Multidisciplinary SIB (Self-Injurious Behaviour) Clinic

The SIB clinic was established at BC Children's Hospital under the auspices of the outpatient psychiatry department in the fall of 2018. The clinic brings together medical specialists (general pediatrics, neurology, pain, and sleep), mental health clinicians (psychiatry, occupational therapy, speech and language pathology, social work), and a board-certified behaviour analyst, all with skill and experience working with these children. The SIB clinic is part of the neuropsychiatry clinic.

A multidisciplinary team is needed for the most complex self-injurious behaviour cases to review pediatric causes, assess behavioural factors, understand the child's sensory and communication profile, and advocate as needed for the families, who are often dealing with high levels of stress from watching their child hurt themselves and not being able to access necessary expertise.

Referral Criteria

Children with neurodevelopmental disorders and SIB can be referred by their community pediatricians to either the neuropsychiatry clinic (ages 6-18) or infant psychiatry clinic (under 6 years of age). The [Outpatient Psychiatry Department referral form](#) should be completed and faxed to the department at 604-875-2099.

Referral Process

Psychiatrists in the neuropsychiatry and infant psychiatry clinics may be successful in reducing SIB by treating comorbidities, and the child may not need to access the SIB clinic. However, if the SIB is of sufficient severity, and refractory to outpatient treatment, then the child will be triaged to the SIB clinic for a multidisciplinary assessment. Once a date for the assessment has been scheduled, the SIB clinic will contact the referring community pediatrician to invite them to the diagnostic rounds.

Assessments

The SIB clinic conducts two multidisciplinary assessments per month (except for July and August when it is closed). The assessments consist of separate specialist appointments, and a 1.5 hours outpatient joint assessment with the pediatricians, mental health clinicians, and behaviour analyst. The SIB clinic team meets for diagnostic rounds after the assessment. The following month, the team facilitates a family feedback session, where the assessment results and recommendations are discussed with the parents/caregivers and any informal supports and/or service providers they wish to invite. The SIB clinic provides a multidisciplinary group report and 6-month follow-up appointment to each family.