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Annual Report

2020/2021



A Message from the President of the Board

This year, 2020-21 is our second virtual Annual General Meeting and marks a moment in history that is significant and will likely live on in our memories for a lifetime. In addition to all the challenges the pandemic has brought, this is an important moment of reckoning in Canada as the harms of Canada's colonial past and the continued oppression of people of colour continue to surface and challenge us.

Throughout this year of unprecedented change and challenge, Choice in Health has thrived. For example:

- This marks a full year of continued commitment and innovation in providing reproductive care despite the challenges created by the pandemic.
- Choice in Health has an incredible new look, with an updated clinic space designed to reflect our values and provide a welcoming environment to all. Most significant to me is how this new brand reflects Choice in Health's commitment to reproductive and social justice.
- This was another year of continued modernization and operational improvements which are less visible but equally important in improving service delivery.

I am proud to be a part of this organization and I want to personally thank all the staff for their hard work, creative energy and resilience over this past year. Our Board has also had a great year, with many changes but has remained stable and committed to furthering the mission of Choice in Health. I would like to thank all the Board members for continuing to support Choice in Health during this time, showing up for online meetings and offering their time, advice and guidance.

This has been both a year of incredible achievement and challenge for our Executive Director Clare Hacksell. Under your guidance, Choice in Health Clinic has demonstrated leadership in service delivery and innovation and continues to stand up for reproductive justice for all. I extend a hearty thanks to the staff, management and the Board for their stewardship of Choice in Health Clinic in 2020-21 and I look forward to what next year will bring.

Thank you!

A message from the Executive Director

What a year.

Looking back to April 1, 2020 it's hard to believe that we were only just at the start of what would become the year none of us will ever forget. 2020/21 may have brought the world to a halt but not CIHC. Despite a global pandemic, a flood, and an entire rethinking of how we physically work together in our space, the team came together to achieve some outstanding accomplishments. Instead of remembering 2020 as the year of COVID I choose to remember it as the year we launched Ontario's first telemedicine MTA program, the year we bought on a new physician provider, the year we kicked off CIHC's first System's Navigation program, the year we rebranded, the year we launched an EMR, the year we improved our technology and cybersecurity, the year we reintroduced BCP sales, the year we brought in Midwives and midwifery students to learn in our space, the year we embraced trauma-informed care, the year we removed financial barriers for non-insured clients, the year where we advocated for expanding our EAP to include all staff, and advocated that all abortion providers obtain early access to the COVID-19 vaccine. Most importantly, this was the year we reaffirmed to ourselves, our clients, and our community that abortion is essential and not even a global pandemic can stop our work.

This past year was defined by accomplishment, endless collaboration, and a rallying together to not only survive but thrive. I am immensely proud to share this annual report with you all. Congratulations to everyone who made this possible. You are Choice in Health.

- clare, Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "c. Hacksel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "c." and a long, sweeping underline.



Our goals for 2020/21



68% 

Due to COVID-19 we provided 1516 insured and 76 uninsured procedures. This was under our target for 2266+ clients. However, we feel confident that an incredible amount of work was done to ensure that our clients are getting safe and accessible care at CIHC.

A message from the Counseling Program

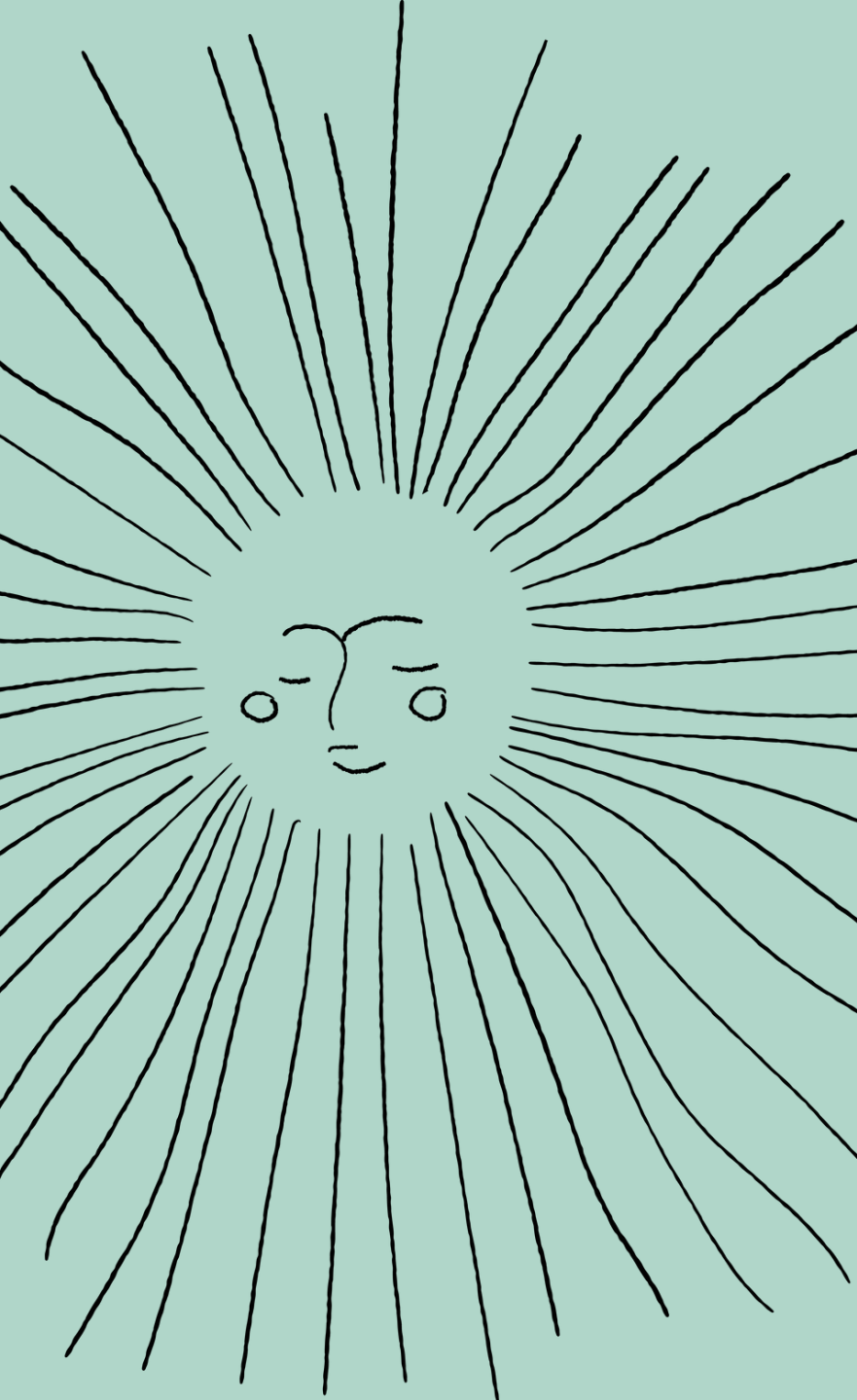
This has been a unique year in the counseling program due to the unprecedented crisis of COVID 19 and its mental, physical and emotional health repercussions for everyone including Choice in Health Clinic counseling clients.

In past years, approximately 30% of sessions were conducted in person and about 70% on the telephone. However, since April 1st 100% of counselling appointments have been phone-based. Over 2020-2021, our registered psychotherapist, provided 79 counseling sessions as compared with 91 in 2018/19. Slightly lower numbers in the program, may be due to COVID related stressors and social inequities that impact accessibly during a pandemic. There has been a lack privacy at home to have a confidential phone call while sheltering in place, the scarcity of accessible childcare, increased parenting demands while sheltering in place with children, and increased work demands for many, especially essential service workers, during this time. For many who sought out this program, the emotional backdrop of COVID-19 heightened the stress and distress of their situation. Clients, just like the general public, experienced chronic uncertainty. There was increased anxiety, pre-existing mental health conditions worsened, and social isolation increased. Post abortion grief and loss was layered with feelings of grief about everyday losses and changes due to COVID. Despite the challenging times, client resilience was noted and reflected back to them. The low cost and free therapy referral network was expanded and updated by the program's psychotherapist and many counseling referrals were provided for continued support. As a result, many clients indicated how grateful and relieved they were to receive some counseling support and compassionate abortion care during these difficult times. It was a year that demonstrated how important mental health support and abortion care is and that it is, without a doubt, essential.

- Nan, Registered Psychotherapist at CIHC

From the team

“For Choice in Health, 2020 -2021 demonstrated our staff’s commitment to reproductive justice and access. It was an immense year of change including adjusting to a pandemic, moving towards virtual care, and a whole rebranding that I think really embodies our values. Our team has been so accommodating, resilient and I think this past year has shown how committed we all are. We have also shown our dedication to continuous learning through our domestic violence, trauma-informed care and San’Yas training which all has been eye-opening.”



“I just want to highlight how important it has been for me as a provider, and also for our patients, that we were deemed an essential service and continue to provide abortion care throughout the pandemic. Even during the strictest days of the lockdown, when dentists and family physician offices were closed, we were still open and offering abortion services. This is something that was vitally important to our patients - and they thanked us for it every day.”

A message from the Medical Director

Clinical care at CIHC has undergone many rapid and dramatic changes during the 2020-2021 whirlwind of a pandemic year. The team rapidly adapted to changes in booking, clinical flow and clinical care processes because of public health measures and recommendations, and while this was very stressful at times, the team consistently continued to provide quality, client-centered care. More importantly, the team stepped up in brainstorming and implementing changes to clinical care (big and small) that would help to minimize potential COVID-19 risk staffing or other clients.

The most notable and exciting change in clinical care during 2020-2021 was the launching of a successful Telemedicine 'No Touch' Abortion program, that was researched and implemented at a record pace, with the first telemedicine abortion client receiving their care in April 2020! The program that CIHC implemented is consistent with the guidelines that were released (at a slower pace) by the SOGC and NAF. CIHC has collaborated with Bay Centre for Birth Control / WCH in the creation of their telemedicine abortion program and continues this collaboration through an ongoing research project.

It is hard to fully appreciate the extent to which telemedicine abortion access during this pandemic helped to reduce barriers to care for our clients. From a lived CIHC provider experience, I can say that some clients participated in their virtual appointments with multiple (adorable and distracting) children crawling over them; these families were home altogether because school and daycare access had been suspended. Some clients received their care sitting in their car, having left the home under the veil of 'grocery errands', since the mobility of many folks was affected by the 'stay at home' order. Some clients had their appointments during their active workhours or while on short breaks, including some healthcare workers who remained essential for in-person healthcare provision. The true value of telemedicine abortion will be further evaluated through ongoing/future research endeavors, including a risk-benefit-safety analysis, but it is clear to me as Medical Director that for some of our clients, access to telemedicine abortion was critical for their ability to access to care during this pandemic.

The introduction of this program (with its new approach to evaluating safety and eligibility in abortion care), and medical care in general during the pandemic was not easy at times, but CIHC staff were engaged and willing to ride the perpetual wave of quality improvement modifications. This collegial enthusiasm persists as more components of our care models continue to shift to virtual and/or electronic platforms!

- Erin, Medical Director

Our Team

CIHC is made up of an incredible team of volunteer board members, administrators, counsellors, medical techs, nurses, and physicians. We couldn't do what we do without the continued dedication and commitment to advancing abortion access that our team brings to the clinic every day.

As a recognition of the incredible work of their staff, other organizations list their staff names in their Annual Report. However, because of continued violence against abortion providers in Canada we can't share the names of our team members.

Abortion may be legal but it's far from destigmatized. Until that day we will continue to work without recognition, providing compassionate care to everyone who comes through our doors.

-CIHC staff

