

# Social prescriptions

**Re: All the lonely people,  
Sharon Kirkey, Aug. 10**

You said it — “Loneliness is a human catastrophe,” and one that is spreading in communities across Canada for a multitude of reasons.

Social prescribing addresses social isolation head-on. Imagine if, along with medication, clinicians could prescribe dance lessons, volunteer roles, single parent groups, and connections to bereavement networks?

Social prescribing is a specially structured way of referring people to a range of local, non-clinical services. Social prescribing has swept the U.K. and shows promising results in achieving positive outcomes for clients, healthcare providers, and communities overall.

Here in Ontario, the Alliance for Healthier Communities is leading a made-in-Canada adaptation of social prescribing in eleven community health centres. This project, called Rx: Community, while in progress, has already enabled us to demonstrate, in a data-driven and evidence-informed way, what we know anecdotally — that people are healthier when they’re connected to social and community supports. Participants have reported reduced isolation, renewed sense of purpose and self-confidence, and increased sense of belonging.

The Alliance for Healthier Communities is Ontario’s voice for community-governed primary health care and represents over 100 community-governed primary health care organizations. Social prescribing is our evidence-based prevention strategy to address the public health issue of loneliness.

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