

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 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.

Kate Mulligan
Director, Policy and Communications
Alliance for Healthier Communities, Toronto

*Published online August 12 as "[Researchers are working on a pill for loneliness, as studies suggest the condition is worse than obesity](#)"