

## **Running Out of Gas: Finding Hope at the HF Connecting Health Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic**

*Andy went through a dark period in his life, especially when he could not find work.*

Dear Jeff,

I want to kill myself. I've thought about it carefully and over the past few years I have struggled to find work. I don't know if it is because of this economy, but since being let go from Petro Canada in 2008, it has been increasingly difficult and frustrating. I did not like the job—staying in a booth, watching everyone leaving and moving while I was stationary, stuck to watch people check their lottery tickets and fill their faces full of beef jerky. Nonetheless, it was a job; it helped pay the bills; it gave me some purpose to wake up in the morning.

I just hate life and myself; I came to this country thinking that I could make a life for myself, only to find out that it was full of false promises and greater financial responsibilities. I don't know how I will ever be able to face my family back home or answer that phone call from them. When they ask me the same question each time: "How are you doing?" I need to pretend that I am fine and that I am able to support myself in this country and that the decision to move away was the right decision. How can I honestly keep up this charade?

I know your immediate response is for me not to kill myself and to hold off on the decision, that there is hope and opportunity, but it has been forever since I last received a paycheck. I am living in squalor and have all the time in the world to think about how much of a loser I am, unable to find work in this massive country.

*Sirens appeared at my home and the police came barging into my home.*

"Mr. Chow, I can say that you have what we call major depression," described by my psychiatrist.

It was 2009 and I began seeing a psychiatrist recommended by the Scarborough General Hospital after my sudden arrival for two weeks. Yes, I was hospitalized for two weeks, unable to function at all. My mental illness had taken over, but the scary part is that I didn't know or understand the impact.

Over the past six years, I have been working with my psychiatrist, discussing, medicating, and revealing part of me to someone who cares for my well being. I joined the Self-Help Program at Hong Fook, and together, with my peers, my psychiatrist, and Hong Fook staff, I made friends, learned new communication skills, developed an interest in arts and crafts, and ultimately, my thoughts of suicide decreased significantly.

In turn, my psychiatrist recommended me to the HF Connecting Health Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic (HFCH NPLC); the staff at the Clinic was amazing.

I developed a strong connection with the Nurse Practitioner; he became my primary health care provider as he would do everything my previous general practitioner would do. I would go in and receive medical help from getting a body check to getting answers to questions about my general health. His care is genuine and his patience is rare; many are familiar with the health care system here where patients need to wait forever and the doctors may not always have much time to answer your questions, but the HFCH NPLC provided a personal touch to their services that allowed me to develop a relationship with them. I am reflecting and only one word comes to mind to describe the HFCH NPLC: unbelievable.

“I can say, your condition has improved drastically and I believe you no longer need my help, Andy. I am going to discharge you,” suggested my psychiatrist.

I sat stunned and amazed, but actually quite delighted. I was noticing progress; it was a bit sad to say goodbye to my psychiatrist after all these years, but I knew that I was now more equipped to handle my depression.

Today, when I enter the HFCH NPLC, I am always welcomed by their staff and love working with them, feeling free to express my feelings to practitioners like they are my friends. Their understanding is a continual support that I need.

*Andy continues to regularly visit the HFCH NPLC and bi-weekly Self-Help Program. His condition is stable as he feels far better than in 2008, the beginning of his journey.*