



Pointe-Saint-Charles Community Clinic

Advocating for Community Health Since 1968

Context of Emergence

Founded in 1968 in a working-class neighborhood of Montreal that was largely underserved in healthcare, the Pointe-Saint-Charles Community Clinic was established by McGill University students in medical, nursing, and sociology. Driven by social justice and community self-determination, the Clinic aimed to meet the health needs by integrating medical care into a broader community health approach.

Process and Historical Perspectives

1968 – 1980 : Creation and Consolidation of a Community Health Model.

The Clinic developed a preventive approach rooted in neighborhood's social realities, becoming a space for mobilization and an incubator for community projects in health, housing, education, and youth services.

1980s : Partial Institutionalization with the Local Community Service Centre (CLSC).

While maintaining citizen governance, tensions arose over working conditions, service professionalization, and the Clinic's activist mission.

1990 – 2000 : Service Stabilization and Expansion.

Development of new practices and advocacy efforts, particularly in oral and mental health.

Depuis 2000 : Since 2000: Constant Adaptation to Contemporary Challenges

The Clinic served as a local hub during the pandemic, coordinating community-based responses to food security and public health needs.

Mobilized Actors

Since its inception, the Clinic has relied on strong citizen mobilization and long-standing community roots. Its board of directors consist of citizens elected at the general assembly. Health professionals, social workers, community organizations, and neighborhood residents participate in the governance, management, and service development.



Original site of the Pointe-Saint-Charles Community Clinic. Photo courtesy of Charles Larson, Le Bullelet, McGill University

Social Outcomes and Impacts

The Pointe-Saint-Charles Community Clinic has transformed urban health services in urban settings by integrating social determinants of health. It represents a social innovation through:

An integrated community-based approach

- connecting healthcare with housing, food, psychosocial support, and living conditions.

Citizen-led governance

- with active residents participation in decision-making and service direction.

A preventive health model

- grounded in proximity, continuity, and social justice.

A transformative role

- in shaping and advancing institutional healthcare practices.

Where Are We Today?

Over fifty years since its founding, the Clinic remains a vibrant model of community health with 140 employees offering a wide range of primary care services. It continues to uphold a health model based on prevention, community empowerment, and combating social inequalities. Despite institutional, financial, and political pressures the Clinic maintains its independence and commitment to social justice and citizen participation.

References

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