



In Collaboration with **Trillium Health Centre**

101 Queensway West, 5th Floor
Mississauga, Ontario L5B 2P7
Phone: 905-272-9700
Fax: 905-272-1416



SUMMERVILLE FAMILY HEALTH TEAM

Medical nonprofit uses multidisciplinary approach to address family primary healthcare

BY SANDRA GUY

CANADA FACES A PRIMARY HEALTHCARE PROBLEM characteristic of the Millennial Generation: young people in the medical field, raised with a sense of purpose and entitlement, have little interest in putting in the 14-hour days of their predecessors to treat unglamorous ailments. So the provincial government initiated the establishment of family-health teams in which the doctors work as partners with each other and with nurses, nurse practitioners, and other healthcare professionals to treat "orphan" patients who would otherwise go to the emergency room for routine ills.

Summerville Family Health Team is the largest such group of doctors, nurses, dieticians, pharmacists, and other health professionals among six Family Health Teams in the Mississauga Halton Local Health Integration Network. Funding is granted from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The amount is relative to the size of the team, but more importantly to the number of registered patients the Family Health Team has as an organization.

"The Family Health Team is all about physicians working in an interdisciplinary concept, alongside [for example] a dietician, a pharmacist, a nurse practitioner, a health promotion specialist, and a social worker to provide primary care," says Lucy Bonanno, executive director of the Summerville Family Health Team in Mississauga, Ontario. "Primary care has never looked like this."

The Summerville Family Health Team has seen its registered patient load increase 10 percent, to 38,000 in the past year, as its doctors, nurses, dieticians, and other healthcare workers treat patients who struggle to find care elsewhere. The Family Health Teams take all comers, and operate as nonprofit organizations.

The Summerville Family Health Team runs five sites, including one that operates as a partnership between Summerville, Trillium Health Centre in Mississauga, and the University of Toronto Medical School, to train physician residents in primary care. The six physicians at that particular site are joined by 18 residents, plus their interdisciplinary team's staff.

The health team operates in a way that officials hope will prove efficient and attractive to medical residents: a physician can take a vacation and a partner doctor will see his or her patients, eliminating the need for the entire office to shut down, and the physicians aren't put in a position of seeing an assembly line of patients all day because other medical staff are on-site. "We have to show [medical school] students how well these models work," Bonanno says. "We have to show that this is a positive model that's working."

Summerville is implementing a chronic-disease-management program that teaches people with illnesses such as asthma and diabetes to take care of themselves and better

AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
MISSISSAUGA, ON

FOUNDED:
2005

EMPLOYEES:
131

AREA OF SPECIALTY:
MULTIDISCIPLINARY
HEALTHCARE



The physician group at Summerville Family Health Team's Apple Hills site.

manage their illnesses. One success story involved a patient with a long reputation for being reluctant to care coming to a diabetic-prevention class with a new-found enthusiasm after practical advice and a small-group setting won him over. The nurse teaching the class brought in a cereal box to teach the diabetes sufferers how to read a nutrition label—one of several practical tips she offered the group of six to eight people. “When the patients see that the staff is enthusiastic and really cares, they turn around,” Bonanno says.

Bonanno concedes that it is a challenge to keep the motivation and engagement levels high among employees at multiple offices. “You have to get really creative to keep everyone engaged, informed, to get feedback and to get people to feel as though they are being heard,” she says.

Bonanno also sends out a weekly newsletter with messages for the staff from herself, from human resources, and from the Family Medicine Teaching Unit with information about classes and presentations in continuing medical education.

The staff teams meet once every four to six weeks for face-to-face meetings where more pertinent information is shared, and staff communicates regularly regarding patient care through electronic medical records. Bonanno credits Dr. Donald Collins-Williams, chairman of the board, with setting a tone of high ethics, professionalism, and collaboration that has led the health team to become a successful operation.

Bonanno joined Summerville Family Health Team a year ago to set up human-resources policies and procedures governing workplace rules, maintaining a safe and non-discriminatory work environment, and to start programs such as chronic-disease management. She repeats her mantra, “Your health is your wealth,” in encouraging others to stay focused and positive in the sector of healthcare.

“I got involved in healthcare because I was raised with my grandparents in the home, and I saw very early on the toll that their illness would have and how it would affect everyone in the family,” adds Bonanno, who started her career 25 years ago as a respiratory therapist.

She returned to school in her gradual climb up the career ladder, earning a Master of Arts in Leadership from Royal Roads University in Victoria, British Columbia and a Certified Health Executive (CHE) designation from the Canadian College of Health Service Executives. She also earned her Certified Association Executive (CAE) designation from the Canadian Society of Association Executives, specific to nonprofit organizations. She is now finishing her MBA at the University of Liverpool.

“One doesn’t jump from a clinical setting to management overnight,” she says, crediting her love of learning for her success. “I just want to know more.” *CEQ*



Quality Improvement & Innovation Partnership

A quality improvement organization focused on advancing the development of a high-performing primary healthcare system.

2345 Argenta Road, Suite 101 | Mississauga, Ontario L5N 8K4

T: 905-363-0490 | F: 905-363-0491

info@qiip.ca www.qiip.ca

Quality Improvement & Innovation Partnership is
funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

A MESSAGE FROM QIIP:

The Quality Improvement and Innovation Partnership (QIIP) is a nonprofit organization, funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, focused on advancing a high-performing primary healthcare system. Since 2008, QIIP has worked with over 120 primary healthcare teams across Ontario by building capacity and capability in three areas of focus: chronic disease care, prevention care and office practice redesign. The recent launch of the Learning Community will support teams in improving and sustaining clinical, functional and population health outcomes. www.qiip.ca.