

BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARDS



2015

Optimizing Capacity of Interprofessional The Centre for Family Medicine Family Health Team, Chronic Pain Clinic

Reversing the Silent Epidemic of Chronic Pain



Chronic pain can be debilitating, preventing people from living life to the fullest. The Chronic Pain Clinic established by the Centre for Family Medicine (CFFM) Family Health Team aims to counteract the pain many people experience in their daily lives and restore more possibilities to them. By using a collaborative, interprofessional, patient-centred approach, the CFFM team has also raised the bar for healthcare service delivery and comprehensive care.

The CFFM team established the Chronic Pain Clinic in 2007, drawing on the wisdom of the old proverb, “Two heads are better than one.” In treating patients, it draws on the varied skills of a physician, a clinical pharmacist, nurses, a family and marriage therapist and a peer pain facilitator, with access to the talents of occupational and physical therapists. In addition to seeing patients individually, team members conduct a six-week chronic pain self-management program for pain sufferers. By maximizing interdisciplinary resources, the team has made pain care available locally, obviating the need for patients to travel to larger centres for treatment.

Those who have participated in the self-management program are unanimously thrilled with the experience, according to patient satisfaction surveys. They are able to follow work plans and use some of the techniques from the program, such as imagery, to keep pain under control.

Despite the success of the program, the CFFM team members aren’t satisfied to rest on their laurels. They continue to work at improving patient outcomes on an ongoing basis, using patient satisfaction surveys and surveys from pain group participants to adjust their programs. The team has turned to continuing education and improvement of skills in various areas of complex pain, such as behaviour management, to learn more and in turn, offer better assistance to their clients.

The team is bringing chronic pain to the attention of healthcare students by sharing their knowledge with pharmacy students at the University of Waterloo, and offering opportunities for medical residents and interprofessional healthcare providers to receive in-clinic training that is only briefly covered in their professional curriculums.

In addition, the CFFM FHT’s chronic pain clinic provides a model for primary care teams that are eager to leverage personnel to meet community needs. In the spirit of collaboration, it has assisted other organizations in following its lead. “The CFFM’s exceptional benevolence to ‘pay-it-forward’ in the spirit of growing a community partnership ... has now had a long-lasting impact,” wrote Lori Butler, Chronic Pain Co-Team Lead, Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre.

A couple of Ontario primary care teams have also approached them for guidance, and the CFFM FHT is “hoping to provide mentorship and guidance to other teams looking to start a chronic pain clinic and resources for their pain patient population.”