

BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARDS



2017

Employing and Empowering the Patient and Caregiver Perspective Leamington and Area Family Health Team

Culture Change – What to Know Before You Go



Leamington and Area Family Health Team has tackled a topic that requires great sensitivity: changing the culture around advance care planning (ACP). It's not an easy conversation to have, exploring values, wishes, and beliefs. The FHT was determined to openly discuss difficult issues that should be faced before patients can no longer speak for themselves.

The team set about educating its members, its patients and the community at large about advance care planning. In doing so, they demonstrated

that ACP:

- improves the experience of patients and their families;
- reduces caregiver trauma, increases the chance of being cared for in preferred setting; and
- reduces unwanted interventions, treatments, and hospitalizations.

Knowing that 50 per cent of Canadians haven't discussed their care wishes with anyone, the team organized a community event featuring talks by a panel of experts, followed by a Q&A. It confirmed community interest in this issue and gave them a sense of existing gaps in knowledge. The team used that feedback to create in-house ACP information sessions that were expanded to include community partners and additional area healthcare providers.

To continue moving beyond these taboos, the FHT holds regular community information sessions, as well as in-house education sessions for patients and caregivers. There's also a patient advocate who willingly shares his story with the community. Staff members stay up-to-date on changes to relevant laws with the help of two staffers who serve on the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) committee for end-of-life care and planning and Hospice Palliative Care Ontario's community of practice champions network. The lead physician is also a member of the Long-Term Care community of practice.

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Since implementing the program, FHT staff has helped other FHTs and NPLCs in the LHIN to build similar capacity. Staff make presentations to interested organizations and community groups and shares links to resources (e.g. Speak Up Ontario) on their website. They also seek patient feedback to improve the program.

Through this initiative, Leamington and Area FHT has been instrumental in breaking down barriers to achieving true patient-centred care.

Key Facts:

- 98% of participants found program helpful
- 94% felt better equipped to handle necessary conversations
- Share expertise willingly with other organizations and providers
- Patient feedback form allows for input and suggestions