

BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARD


2012

Strengthening the FHT Team
Award Winner - Sherry Kennedy, Taddle Creek Family Health Team

New care, new style — maximizing team work



Family health teams were created to offer a new approach to health care. Sherry Kennedy, executive director of the Taddle Creek team, recognized early on that a new kind of care needed a new kind of organization.

Since Taddle Creek was launched in 2006, Sherry has worked to encourage change from top-down, traditional physician-led management structures and program delivery models to integrate all the professions into both. Her persuasiveness has led to an equal representation of doctors and other healthcare providers on all committees and in strategic planning, and ensured the unique talents of non-medical staff are leveraged in leadership positions. The infrastructure she has built enhances collaboration, to promote cross-fertilization of ideas and practices among all health providers.

The return on Ms Kennedy's efforts can be seen in all aspects of the Taddle Creek team's work. Physicians have a more comprehensive understanding of program delivery and patient-centred care, and have learned to consider many perspectives as they plan care. Other healthcare providers are encouraged to attend clinical and educational meetings to broaden their skill sets — which has led to them participating more in everything from clinics for high blood pressure to diabetes group programs, well baby visits, chronic disease management and the Complex Care Clinic.

Patients, of course, benefit from improved access to an array of services. The fact that healthcare providers other than physicians have so much visibility helps patients understand the value of getting involved in their own healthcare.

Under Ms Kennedy's leadership, there has been less than 8 per cent turnover in staff since Taddle Creek opened for business, and her exceptional talent as a manager and booster of team functioning contributed to it winning the Family Practice of the Year award in 2011 from the Ontario College of Family Physicians.

Moving autonomous primary-care providers to adopting a shared care model is probably the most difficult challenge facing family health teams. Ms Kennedy's extraordinary skill has been to do this without alienating physicians while clearly supporting the whole team.