

The Centre for Family Medicine FHT: A model of chiropractic collaboration

Kitchener/Waterloo is known as a hub of innovation in Ontario — and the credit extends beyond just the tech sector. The Centre for Family Medicine FHT is charting an innovative path in its collaboration with health professionals.

The Centre for Family Medicine includes family physicians, nurse practitioners, a dietitian, clinical pharmacists, chiropractors, social workers and family and marital therapists. The centre's team also has associated professionals which are not currently funded through the FHT model -- a physiotherapist, optometrists (who are part of an onsite optometry clinic that's affiliated with the University of Waterloo), and a chiropractor (Dr. Craig Bauman).

Collaborative models involving chiropractic care are currently in place in a number of Ontario FHTs and other primary care settings. Although not funded, these collaborative models include chiropractors who practice within the FHT, utilize the electronic medical records (EMR) and participate in shared care and patient education. Both the FHT physicians and the rostered patients benefit from having chiropractors as part of collaborative team-based care. These chiropractors are, effectively, part of the FHT, but are not publicly funded; they bill patients as they would in other settings, pay rent or other overhead to the FHT, and they also offer some pro-bono consultations and treatment to FHT rostered patients unable to pay.

"This benefits patients," says Dr. Joseph Lee, a family physician at the FHT, who also serves as a faculty member of the Family Medicine departments of the University of Western Ontario and McMaster, as well as the school of Pharmacy at the University of Waterloo. "It increases access to care for patients when a team is providing primary care services. It also provides greater comprehensiveness of care for the patients." Patients are not the only ones who benefit from the team approach, notes Dr. Lee. "We're one of the first pilots of this model and we regularly conduct surveys to measure satisfaction rates," he says. Not only has patient satisfaction been exceedingly positive, but providers, too, have registered "overwhelmingly high" satisfaction rates.

One of the elements the Centre has adopted to enhance the team environment is interdisciplinary education. "We have something called trans-disciplinary rounds," explains Dr. Lee. "This is an opportunity to speak about clinical practice. For instance, Dr. Bauman has given talks about what chiropractors do. That helps to break down barriers. That's important when you've got a mix of professional cultures."

Dr. Bauman, who shares a clinic with a Registered Dietitian, physiotherapist and four therapists at the FHT, believes the EMR is a key facilitator to successful outcomes for a team environment. "More information and more opinions from different disciplines gives you a broader picture of the patient's condition," says Dr. Bauman. "The communication is really valuable for the patient. It's also very efficient for one practitioner to see what another has done." Additionally, he states, "I have a much better understanding now of what the other professions do."

A culture of research is now flourishing, with one notable study into anti-coagulant drugs, and another investigating the effectiveness of interprofessional collaboration in the treatment of dementia and mild cognitive impairment. As well, the facility is being used as a training model for other FHTs. "We embarked on this to teach the next generation of health professionals how they can work collaboratively and why they should," explains Dr. Lee. "I don't think it's a stretch to include chiropractors in FHTs. I think they could add to the comprehensiveness of the care we provide. What we've seen is that a very inclusive interprofessional model works well and we'd like to see this become the standard. It can really transform primary care."

For further information on how a tailored model of chiropractic collaboration could fit into your FHT please contact the Ontario Chiropractic Association:

Tel: 416-860-7188 E-mail: aendicott@chiropractic.on.ca