

# Love, caring key to Patients First plan

BY VICKI GILHULA

There wasn't a plethora of charts, statistics or medical jargon at the Inspiration to Action forum hosted by the North East LHIN and Health Quality Ontario Nov. 16 in Sudbury. Instead, the forum celebrated ideas and success stories about providing quality health care that puts patients first.

Guest speaker Dr. Joshua Tepper, president and CEO of Health Quality Ontario (HQO), called the audience of about 100 "pioneers" and "the first generation" to provide "patient-centred" care.

"You are the first to say quality is part of your job. It is not an extra add-on. It is not mysterious or different," he said.

Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care was adopted by the province in 2016. It expanded the role of the LHINs.

HQO is the provincial adviser on the quality of health care.

The six dimensions of quality health care are safety, effective, patient-centred, efficient, timely and equitable.

In regard to defining patient-centred care, Tepper said it can be described as finding joy and love in the workplace.

In his presentation Tepper quoted Edwards Deming, the father of quality improvement in the workplace, about the need for people to find joy in their work in order to take ownership of it.

"I was struck by the people I met today who focus on joy, safety, and engagement of the workforce...Why we do quality improvement is for our patients. If it feels like a punishment, we won't succeed," said Tepper.

He also shared a quote from American health-care specialist Dr. Donald Berwick, who said, "I think health care is more about



**“ Love and caring for others is what “calls us into this profession.”**

— Dr. Joshua Tepper, President and CEO, Health Quality Ontario

love than about most other things.”

Tepper said, "Love and caring for others is what calls us into this profession...we believe in the healing process and their commitment to helping someone in their time of vulnerability and illness."

Earlier, during an interview with *Northern Ontario Medical Journal*, Tepper acknowledged the unique challenges in Northern Ontario regarding access to care, geography, marginalized communities and higher rates of substance use.

"But what is remarkable, as I had a chance to see some (health-care) initiatives today, that there is remarkable innovation that people are providing better care...Innovations that respect the cultural uniqueness of the North, of the Indigenous community, that recognize fundamental challenges but also applying new models of



The Inspiration to Action forum was held Nov. 16 in Sudbury. Jennifer Osesky, Quality Lead, North East LHIN (Sault Ste. Marie), Caroline Buonocore, Quality Improvement Specialist, Health Quality Ontario North West LHIN, and Joanna DeGraaf-Dunlop, Quality Improvement Specialist working with the North East LHIN, greeted attendees.

care and technology to address some of the barriers we read about."

The HQO's Health in the North report, issued in April 2017, found people in Northern Ontario live about two and half years less than people in other parts of Ontario; they are more likely to die prematurely due to suicide, circulatory disease and respiratory disease.

Calling HQO a "help dog" not a watchdog, Tepper said, "Our goal is to support people to improve care."

"Our role is to provide information they need; the technical training they need and the knowledge of the tools for improvement...to do what they want to do, which is

to improve the health care.

"You can't improve quality without data. Until we know where the gaps are, it is hard to know where to focus. We can't invest our resources everywhere."

"Our reports are not meant to be critical. They are actually meant to highlight where we need to support."

The forum was chaired by Dr. Reena Dhath, the North East LHIN clinical quality lead. Dhath practises family medicine with Northeastern Ontario Medical Offices in Sudbury, which was recently named one of the 2017 Family Practices of the Year by the Ontario College of Family Physicians.

## contents

### HSNRI opens new \$15-million facility

Research keeps 90 employees very busy

4

### ConnectingOntario

EHealth sharing expected to be revolutionary

6

### Rural hubs redefining health care

Province has five pilot sites

8

### Quality of life and death

More clinicians needed for assisted dying

11

### Community health workers key to success

Diabetes pilot shows promise in remote areas

12

### Final thoughts from Dr. Roger Strasser

No missionaries, mercenaries or mad men

18

### Also in this issue

NDP health critic hopeful Bill 160 will pass .....	9
Northwest LHIN addresses service gaps in palliative care.....	10
Nipissing hospice to open in 2018 .....	11
TADH patient engagement program reaches out .....	14
Demand doubles for care at Algoma Geriatric Clinic .....	15

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