

Electronic Medical Records

EMRs building strong physician-patient relationships:

Patients' Choice Award nominators find EMRs provide opportunity for better care

by OntarioMD Communications

THE FEBRUARY ISSUE OF THE ONTARIO MEDICAL REVIEW FEATURED AN ARTICLE ABOUT THE FIRST ANNUAL PATIENTS' CHOICE AWARDS, WHICH OFFER PATIENTS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO PUBLICLY RECOGNIZE AND THANK THEIR PHYSICIANS FOR PROVIDING OUTSTANDING CARE, AND ENHANCING THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE IN THE HEALTH-CARE SYSTEM.

Sponsored by the Patients' Association of Canada and the OMA, this pilot initiative, which launched in Peterborough,* is the first of its kind in Canada where patients in the community not only nominate candidates, but also judge the entries and select the award recipients.

The winners of the inaugural Patients' Choice Awards were Dr. Carolyn Brown and Dr. David Newport, both family physicians at the Peterborough Clinic Family Health Team.

Peterborough resident Barbara Hamilton, who nominated Dr. Brown, was impressed by the level of care that her husband received prior to his death in 2010. In her nomination submission, she wrote that Dr. Brown "is the most caring, kind and compassionate doctor I have ever had. She never rushes anything, she explains everything."

Mrs. Hamilton noted that on those occasions when she visits the clinic and Dr. Brown is not available to see her, the level of care she receives remains high due, in part, to the clinic's use of EMRs: "With an EMR, my information is readily available for any health-care pro-

vider. Should it be a weekend, or I have to go to an evening clinic, everything is there. I think it's an improvement."

Ms. Sonya Kemp, who nominated Dr. Newport for the award, is a long-time patient who appreciates Dr. Newport's skills, friendliness, full attention during appointments, and his commitment to creating a patient-doctor partnership.

Ms. Kemp feels that EMRs provide an opportunity for better care: "I see the presence of a computer as a val-

able tool. It doesn't stand in the way of a personal relationship. I find it reassuring...that Dr. Newport can easily check my medications and has my history right in front of him. He is aware of anything that might need to be changed. It works for both of us."

Drs. Brown and Newport also described their experience with EMRs, and the positive impact on the physician-patient relationship.

Dr. Brown had never used an EMR prior to joining the Peterborough Clinic

Diabetes care at the Peterborough Clinic Family Health Team – an EMR success story

The Peterborough Clinic Family Health Team is using its EMR to improve the level of care for patients with diabetes. Dr. David Newport explained: "We developed efficiencies in delivering care, which has led to significant improvement in compliance for patients attending visits and being tested."

The improved compliance results are shown through Ontario's Baseline Diabetes Dataset Initiative, which tracks three key tests that diabetics should undergo on a regular basis, namely HbA1C blood glucose, LDL-C cholesterol and a retinal eye exam.

Dr. Newport proudly reported: "Our compliance numbers are twice the average for our Local Health Integration Network."

in 2008. She knew that it would take some time to adjust to it, but she persevered, and now finds that EMRs make charting faster and more comprehensive.

"Having the information about a patient so easily accessible gives me more confidence. I don't have to keep looking back to ensure I haven't missed something," said Dr. Brown.

In effect, there's no more fumbling around in a paper file to try to find the information she needs. The EMR allows Dr. Brown to concentrate on the patient in front of her.

Dr. Newport is a veteran EMR user, having started soon after finishing his medical studies in 1999. He summarized his approach to EMRs this way: "During the patient encounter, I really want to make sure I'm listening and then respond. I feel it's important to communicate well, and let the patient know what the plan is at the end of the appointment."

The EMR at the clinic helps Dr.

Newport locate information easily. This frees him to focus all his attention on patients.

"The EMR helps me stay on time and take care of patients without feeling overwhelmed," said Dr. Newport. He added, "Our reception can quickly check when we last saw people and if they need a (prescription) renewal, we can do it by phone when appropriate. Inevitably, renewals are not all at the same time. Running back and forth to a doctor to get that sorted out is a nuisance. If you can avoid that, patients are happier."

OntarioMD is delighted to hear such positive comments about how electronic medical records are working to improve the physician-patient experience. These comments reinforce our conviction that EMRs enable better health care.

For more information on EMR adoption, visit www.ontariomd.ca, e-mail emrfunding@ontariomd.com, or call toll-free 1.866.744.8668.

*The Patients' Association of Canada (PAC) and the OMA chose Peterborough as the first community in which to launch the Patients' Choice Awards for physicians. In mid-2010, the Award was publicized through newspaper advertisements and mail drops. Residents were encouraged to nominate physicians who offered exceptional care and commitment to the patient experience. The winners were announced on December 1, 2010. The PAC plans to expand the awards for physicians across Ontario and Canada, as well as offering it for other health-care professions. ■

The OMR EMR Adoption column is provided by OntarioMD, a subsidiary of the OMA. OntarioMD manages eHealth Ontario's EMR Adoption Program. If you would like a Peer Leader to answer your questions and support your adoption of an OntarioMD certified EMR, a free service for physicians, e-mail peer.leader.program@ontariomd.com.