

QIPSF 2018: A masterclass in quality

Bookended by two captivating plenary speakers, this year's Quality Improvement and Patient Safety Forum held in Toronto on Oct. 16 provided delegates with a masterclass in the various requirements for designing and managing quality improvement and patient safety initiatives – and showcased several outstanding examples.

More than 650 delegates which included clinicians working hard on the frontlines, patients and others attended this third joint invitational meeting sponsored by the Centre for Quality Improvement for Patient Safety (C-QuIPS), Improving & Driving Excellence Across Sectors (IDEAS) and Health Quality Ontario.

“This is an opportunity for you to develop your skills ... share innovations on what works and lessons for others,” said Dr. Brian Wong, associate director of C-QuIPS in his introductory remarks as co-moderator of the forum.

“It's really a chance to come together ... as we have worked to develop this provincial quality improvement community,” added Lee Fairclough, vice president, Quality Improvement at Health Quality Ontario and the other forum co-moderator.

Delegates to the conference also heard opening remarks from Health Quality Ontario President and CEO Dr. Joshua Tepper who took time to reflect on the evolution of the quality agenda in Ontario as he will be leaving the organization at the end of the month.

“The one message I would hope to leave you with ... is that the true path to improvement is a community journey,” said Dr. Tepper who also called on the quality community to be open to disruptive forces and to involve the disenfranchised in leading the quality agenda.

Plenary speakers Dr. Brian Hodges and Dr. Jeffrey Braithwaite agreed on the rapid changes facing the health care system but focused on very different aspects of managing that change. In opening the conference, Dr. Hodges, a psychiatrist and chief medical officer at the University Health Network in Toronto, gave delegates a glimpse of the technologically-driven future that is already having an impact on health care.

He discussed how artificial intelligence (AI), deep learning, robotics and digital health will force a change in the way health care professionals are trained and will work. “We are entering an age where technology is going to augment the empathy that providers offer to patients,” he said, but added “digitizing health care should not mean dehumanizing patients.”

At the end of the day, closing keynote speaker, Dr. Jeffrey Braithwaite, professor and foundational director at the Australian Institute of Health Innovation challenged traditional thinking about patient safety and implementing quality care initiatives.

Dr. Braithwaite challenged the current focus on reducing medical errors and adverse events by saying we must acknowledge how 90% of what happens in the health care system provides the desired results. He also talked of the failure of policy makers, researchers and others to acknowledge the often messy and disorganized way in which the health care system really works.

Dr. Braithwaite closed by discussing the challenges involved in reforming health systems. “We really have to come to grips that health care is not amenable to linear solutions, because it is a complex adaptive system,” he said.

Between the presentations by Drs. Hodges and Braithwaite, delegates had an opportunity to network and to attend two sets of breakout sessions, many of which dealt with various components of implementing programs to improve quality – such as morbidity and mortality rounds, the effective use of data or the Plan-Do-Study-Act methodology. Delegates also spoke of the mentoring opportunities that came during the day from speaking with leaders in quality care in Ontario who were in attendance.

A two-part breakout session dealt with strategies for leading system change for quality care and patient safety initiatives. This session benefitted from insights from Dr. Tepper who provided his assessment on how Ontario was doing on delivering on the quality agenda. Lee Fairclough said in the second part of the session, “We have started fostering a culture of quality across the system.”.

Innovation and learning were also featured in the 110 posters from institutions as geographically wide-ranging as Quinte Healthcare, Health Sciences North in Sudbury and the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry, Western University, London. A number of the posters as well as breakout sessions explicitly addressed many of the priorities currently facing the health care system such as wait times, hallway health care, mental health and patient safety.