

PATIENT-CENTRE CARE: Discovering Leading Practices & Lessons Learned

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Ted Ball

Sholom Glouberman, the President of the *Patients' Association of Canada* has been stewarding the development of a provincial and national patients' agenda and developing strategies that will impact positively on the healthcare delivery system at the service delivery, organizational, governance, regulatory and policy development levels of our healthcare delivery system.

The *Patients' Association of Canada* is a patient-led and patient-governed organization that is dedicated to exploring and articulating the patient perspective in healthcare in order to improve the patient experience. Over the past three years, there has been a period of intensive inquiries by the PAC into: "the patient perspective".

Sholom has organized periodic gatherings of 20-30 patients -- who will utilize story-telling and story-writing techniques to surface the fundamental issues that impact on "the patient experience". *Open Space Conferences* of over 100 people have been, and will be held with patients and health service providers to jointly probe the central issues that arise from the shift to "patient-centred" from "provider-centred" health services designs.

As part of a Trillium grant to learn how Board members can play a key role in supporting organizations that want to become more patient-centred; and to learn how Boards, managers and service providers can become more patient-centred, Sholom assembled a remarkable 8-person study team to visit leading-edge examples of "patient-centred care" to discover what lessons can be learned, and what leading practices could be uncovered.

While every member of the PAC Study Team carries a deep personal experience as a patient -- or advocate for a family member -- they also each have extraordinary experiences in healthcare management, governance, policy development, consulting, business and academia. They truly are an "expert group" -- who have a deep appreciation of the "patient perspective".

Sholom invited me along on the Study Team's initial site visit to *Kingston General Hospital*. I've recently written on these blogs how CEO Leslee Thompson has an audacious goal: *to become the first patient-led hospital on the planet*".

The PAC Study Team's task was to probe and kick the tires in a series of focus group dialogues over a day and a half – with board members, members of the *Patients' Experience Advisory Council*, front-line healthcare service providers, cleaners and patients.

The exchange started off with an in-depth dialogue between the PAC team and representatives of the *Patient Experience Advisory Council* -- where we gained amazing insights into KGH's learning journey over the past three years as it transformed itself after the implosion following the appointment *Graham Scott* as the Provincial Supervisor after that came the development of the Board of Governors that re-focused on their role and function, and the hiring of new CEO, Leslee Thompson -- where, under her leadership, the strategic imperative of the hospital was to “*transform the patient experience, through a focus on quality, safety and service”.*

While there is solid and whole-hearted support from KGH's Board – particularly the leadership and support that came from the Quality Committee of the Board – as Board Chair *Chris Cunningham* said, “this project has been primarily driven by passionate and committed leadership from the CEO and senior management.” He said, over the past few years there has been a bottom-up unleashing of energy and commitment to do things differently at KGH”.

Because the Study Team was able to gather privately between the four major dialogue forums to compare notes, we were able to sort out information and clarify what else we really wanted to know from our hosts. This was not a “golly-gee” panel keen to drink the cool-aid from the Kingston harbor. This was an investigative team on a fact-finding mission.

At our first meeting, *Eleanor Rivoire*, Vice President, Clinical Administration & Professional Practice and CNE, along with *Anndale McTavish*, one of the 40 Patient Experience Advisors and *Daryl Bell*, KGH Lead for Patient & Family Centred Care provided our study team with real insights into the struggles and the incremental victories that KGH experienced at the beginning of their learning journey.

“We've still have just started on our transformation journey”, says CEO Leslee Thompson, when she addressed the Study Team members. She talked about the first 100 and 200 days following the departure of the Supervisor -- and how the organization began to shift and change to reflect what they had learned along the way.

“At the very beginning, we heard testimony from members of our community that they were scared to come to our hospital. It was alarming. We had to win back their confidence. Everyone at KGH knew we had to change”, Thompson told us.

“This is very much a bottom-up, organic process that is really catching hold here”, we were told. Indeed, the many people we met in these dialogue forums were clearly very passionate in their belief that deep positive changes are possible – simply by following

the three requirements adopted by KGH's *Patient Experience Advisory Council*:
“Respect Me”, “Hear Me”, “Work With Me.”

The role of the *Patient Experience Advisor* at KGH is to ensure that the voice of the patient is heard and influences planning and decision-making on all issues that affect patient care.

Their responsibilities include:

- to partner with staff and participate in activities that are designed to ensure patient and family centred care is provided in an environment that promotes healing, ensures dignity and instills trust;
- to keep the patient and family as the centred of our healthcare system;
- to be viewed as a positive reinforcement of the patient and family centred care initiative;
- to build partnerships with health care professionals based on mutual respect and open communication;
- to participate in facility design, quality improvement, program development and education;
- to support the hospital and clinics in their process improvement projects; and,
- to be accountable to the KGH Lead for Patient and Family Centred Care;

About 2,000 KGH staff members have already completed their education on patient-centred care contained in the hospital's *Inter-professional Collaborative Practice Model*.

With a beaming face and twinkling eyes sparkling out of rimless glasses, Daryl Bell the hospital lead on this project told our Study Team “This project has given me a renewed sense of purpose in my life.”

While everyone at KGH carefully points out that “not everyone is on board yet”, and that “there are still skeptics and disbelievers”. Nevertheless, what we discovered were Board members, front-line service providers, managers and patients who were all deeply committed to push onward to become a truly “patient-led hospital”.

While I'll be happy to share the site visit Study Team's Report when it becomes available, what stood out for me was that I could not uncover a “template” or “formula” in the KGH model.

After a day and a half of exciting learning dialogues, what I could see from the KGH case is a unique combination of personalities who -- because the CEO encourages and nurtures

innovation -- have come together with a deep commitment to transform the old KGH into what they hope will evolve over the next several years into a new model of hospital: “**the patient-led hospital**”.

What would that look like, feel like, be like – and, how do we get there?

“The Patients’ Association of Canada doesn’t have a ‘one-size fits all’ template for being patient-centred or patient-led”, says Sholom Glouberman reminding everyone of the failure of TQM/CQI when it had a template for a flavor-of-the-month healthcare initiative. “Like the folks in Kingston, we’re still learning about what works and what doesn’t.”

Sholom and his team from the Patients’ Association of Canada intend to “kick the tires” of a few more organizations that seem to be leading on the journey towards patient-centred care, in order to share their findings with health system leaders.

Next week my blog is entitled “*Pushing The Boundaries Toward A ‘People-Centered’ Healthcare System*”.