



RESPECTING DIFFERENCES – CELEBRATING OPPORTUNITIES

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN FOR CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE HEALTH CARE SERVICES

As home to one of the most culturally diverse populations in the province, the Central West LHIN and local health service providers share a common passion when it comes to addressing the barriers people currently face to accessing health care services.

That passion was the driving force behind the Central West LHIN's recent one day Diversity & Inclusivity Workshop, held November 8th at the Chandni Banquet Hall in Brampton. In the spirit of collaboration and knowledge sharing, more than 125 health service providers from within and outside the Central West LHIN joined together to network, learn from one another, and identify new opportunities for improving access to responsive health services.

Morning panel presentations and afternoon breakout sessions focused on the theme of Building Equity in Health Services. Several health service providers profiled local initiatives which served as a platform for discussing how the LHIN and service providers can work together to build 'best practice', culturally competent health services that meet the many needs of a growing and diverse population.

"Momentum is building on this important Integrated Health Service Plan (IHSP) priority,"

says Joe McReynolds, Board Chair, Central West LHIN, who welcomed attendees to the session. "What I witnessed today was a group of people who are truly committed to creating a health system that meets the needs of all the people of the LHIN."



Breakout sessions surfaced a variety of perspectives on cultural competency generating thought-provoking discussions.

Being responsive means providing the residents of the Central West LHIN, no matter what their ethno-cultural background, with access to programs and services designed to meet their individual needs, to improve health outcomes and

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generate higher consumer satisfaction. It means focusing on improving the effectiveness and the efficiency of health care resources, It also recognizes the valuable asset found in the diversity within our own workforces.

"We recognize that cultural diversity is only one aspect of diversity within our communities," says Mimi-Lowi Young, CEO, Central West LHIN. "In the long term, we will be engaging a wider array of people within our LHIN to better understand their specific issues and priorities. Our current focus on cultural diversity represents a starting point for the development of a broader action plan that will address all aspects of diversity and resolve the barriers they pose to health system access."



Central West LHIN CEO Mimi Lowi-Young stresses that a focus on cultural diversity represents a starting point for a broader action plan addressing all aspects of diversity across the LHIN.

INTEGRATING DIVERSITY INTO ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Keynote speaker Uzma Shakir, Executive Director, South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario and a recent winner of the prestigious Atkinson Economic Justice Fellowship Award, set the tone for the day with her impassioned presentation which spoke to

the importance of embedding cultural sensitivity into organizational culture.

"It's not a question of whether or not we need to be culturally responsive," notes Shakir. "What's important is that cultural sensitivity comes naturally in our interactions with each other and with the clients we serve. Achieving that will be a major step towards breaking down existing barriers."



Keynote speaker Uzma Shakir emphasizes that cultural sensitivity needs to be imbedded in organizational culture.

CELEBRATING DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

The Workshop included panel presentations by four speakers each offering a unique perspective on the topic of diversity within a healthcare setting. Floydeen Charles-Fridal, Program Director, Rexdale Community Health Centre talked about the importance of valuing diversity and promoting inclusivity. In particular, she noted the need for organizations to 'walk the talk', by demonstrating cultural sensitivity in everything we do.

Baldev Mutta, Executive Director, Punjabi Community Health Centre (PCHC) talked about how the PCHC functions as a 'culturally appropriate' service provider where its

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professionals are accountable for adjusting their philosophy, way of work and service delivery to suit their clients' needs, rather than clients adjusting their worldview to suit the service delivery arrangements and treatment options of the professionals.

"Our staff doesn't expect clients to come to our agency," says Mutta. "They are authorized and empowered to reach out to clients in whatever way best suits the needs of the client, whether that means meeting them in a coffee shop or talking to them by cell phone."

Looking at diversity from both a staff and patient perspective, Marylin Kanee, Diversity and Human Rights Advisor, Mount Sinai Hospital, noted that for health care providers, diversity is an issue of equity that ensures they are in tune with the needs of the communities that they serve. For patients, diversity means being treated with respect in an inclusive and welcoming environment where information is translated and interpreted so there are fewer misunderstandings and errors.

Rounding out the panel presentations, Pat Rose, Case Manager, Multicultural Project with the Mississauga Halton Community Care Access



The Diversity & Inclusivity workshop attracted more than 125 health service providers from both within and outside the Central West LHIN.

Centre (CCAC) talked about the importance of linking with community partners and building collaborative relationships with staff to foster a proactive exchange of information on the topic of diversity.

DEVELOPING LOCAL DIVERSITY INITIATIVES

Collaboration was at the forefront during the afternoon breakout sessions where participants were asked to discuss the most important characteristics of a culturally competent and responsive service (awareness, education, respect, accountability), how to measure cultural competency and responsiveness (surveys, client satisfaction, staff satisfaction, service accountability agreements), and what 'quick start' service initiatives could be launched right away with limited resources (link services between organizations to support one another – i.e. translation services).

Complementing the day's focus on cultural diversity, participants enjoyed a taste of a fusion of foods that included a mix of Jamaican, Chinese and South Asian dishes.



Workshop participants were treated to a fusion of Jamaican, Chinese and South Asian cuisine.

NEXT STEPS

The workshop culminated in a request from the Central West LHIN for people to express their interest to take an active role in moving initiatives forward in collaboration with the LHIN.

"The response has been phenomenal," says Samina Talat, Consultant, Community Engagement, Central West LHIN, and coordinator of the workshop. "We've received expressions of interest from more than 30 of our attendees indicating just how passionate people are about creating a culturally responsive health system."

Over the coming weeks, the input gained from the breakout sessions combined with learnings from earlier community engagement forums will be posted on the Central West LHIN's website for easy access by workshop attendees, health service providers and community members.

"This workshop helped us to better understand what the attendees see as the priorities for moving forward and where they see opportunities to collaborate on initiatives to create culturally appropriate, sensitive and competent services that will ensure all residents in the Central West LHIN have equitable access to health services."

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Panel members Pat Rose, Marylin Kanee and Baldev Mutta respond to questions from an enthusiastic audience.

