

IDEAS graduates urged to be leaders in time of change

Inspirational addresses stressing the importance of leadership book-ended a day-long recognition of the 10th graduating cohort of the IDEAS (Improving & Driving Excellence Across Sectors) Advanced Learning Program at the University of Toronto recently.

In their remarks, both Dr. Adalsteinn Brown, director of the Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation at the University of Toronto and IDEAS Co-Principal Investigator, and Dr. Joshua Tepper, President and CEO of Health Quality Ontario said that in the challenging times currently facing health care and the world in general it was important to have leaders such as those that IDEAS is striving to produce.

“Whatever your political views are ... you’re leading in a time of change (and) that’s what this course is trying to prepare you for,” Dr. Tepper told the graduating class.

To date, IDEAS has graduated more than 2400 clinical and administrative health care professionals in quality improvement, adaptive leadership and change management. [IDEAS](#) is a collaborative partnership between Health Quality Ontario, six Ontario universities, the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, and the Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation at the University of Toronto.

The graduation ceremonies saw 15 new teams in the Advanced Learning Program present their applied learning projects, all of which contribute to advancing strategic priorities set out in the provincial quality agenda for health care and improving patient care across Ontario.

Joe Mauti, an IDEAS program quality improvement coach, who served as the master of ceremonies for the event, said the projects presented summarized the power of a learning community.

He said the presentations aimed to prove one of two theories; that co-ordinating care for complex patients will help them manage their care, and that supporting transitional discharge of patients from hospital back into the community will reduce readmissions. All projects involved the province’s Health Links program which co-ordinates care for patients with complex needs.

Mauti said the projects highlighted the importance of working collaboratively and of building relationships among health care providers, organizations, patients and the entire care team.

He said they also demonstrated the importance of taking a holistic perspective around the social determinants of health.

“It’s hard not to be seized by current events,” said Professor Brown in his opening remarks, noting that in the face of the current political environment, aspirations to improve quality “tend to crumble or be threatened.”

He briefly summarized the dramatic changes currently facing the health care systems in both the United States and the United Kingdom (U.K.). He noted that in the U.K. there is currently a “huge financial pall” hanging over the National Health Service in which the perspectives of those dedicated to quality improvement are “dulled by lack of exercise or hemmed in by waiting for opportunity.”

In contrast, he said, the Ontario health care system is just now at the start of a course of massive transformation where those dedicated to quality improvement have the opportunity to act and make changes.

“If we wait to find out what we should be doing, we will lose the opportunity... I hope you will be steadfast in applying leadership skills as you move forward” Professor Brown told the graduating class.

“Right now, leadership is really, really important and really hard,” Dr. Tepper remarked, noting that health care systems across Canada are in upheaval with new approaches to funding to a degree not seen in decades.

In closing the day, Dr. Tepper used the word GIFT to denote key leadership attributes: G = generosity, acknowledging others, saying thank you; I = innovation – carving out time for innovation; F=forward looking –live in the moment but look to the future and T= time, use every minute, and think with who and how you spend your time.

“The health care system and the people who depend on it, our patients, are in desperate need of the generosity from leaders in the system - and that’s you.”