

A Moonshot for Quality: HQT 2017

A moonshot to bring quality care to the Ontario health care system within the next decade: That was both the challenge and the inspiration offered by Health Quality Ontario President and CEO Dr. Joshua Tepper in his opening remarks to the Health Quality Transformation 2017 conference in Toronto, Oct. 24.

Almost 3000 people across Toronto, Sudbury and Thunder Bay – the largest registration ever for the meeting, with hundreds more on the waiting list – attended the conference to hear Dr. Tepper and other inspiring speakers such as U.S. quality and health improvement guru Dr. Donald Berwick and patient equity advocate Kim Katrin Milan address the premiere Canadian meeting dedicated solely to health quality.

While Dr. Tepper quoted liberally from U.S. President John F. Kennedy’s speech from 56 years ago which launched the U.S. space program and ultimate moon landing, Dr. Berwick had a more sombre message from south of the border as he talked of recent trends which he said threatened the U.S. health care system.

“Sometimes we don’t have enough audacity in health care,” Dr. Tepper said, noting that Canada still lags behind many jurisdictions on health indicators when it should be doing better. While improving quality is not easy, he said, it was a challenge “we will accept.”

For his part, Berwick kept the audience mesmerized with personal stories and studies detailing what he described as the current battle in the U.S. health care system between the traditional values of trust and professionalism and the current trend towards accountability, measurement, and profits. Berwick pulled no punches in indicating he thought the U.S. system was under significant threat.

To a standing ovation, Berwick outlined his proposals for reforming health care and closed by emphasizing it was relationships between providers and patients that were of paramount importance.

Milan delivered a powerful address about the need to address equity and treat all patients with compassion. “Treat people the way they want to be treated,” she said, “and that means we have to ask.”

“We need to see ourselves reflected in our health care system,” said Milan, voicing the perspective of a queer, pregnant woman married to a trans individual and helping her mother deal with end-of-life issues

Several other themes were threaded throughout the plenary and breakout sessions as well as the numerous poster presentations on show. These included: the fundamental importance of involving patients in all elements of health care planning and delivery (Health Quality Transformation was once again certified as Patients Included meaning patients participated in all elements of the conference from planning to presenting); the need for leadership and a culture dedicated to quality; and the importance of provider well-being as an enabler of safe and quality care.

At this conference last year, Dr. Tepper unveiled the major Health Quality Ontario initiative of [quality standards](#) to help address variations in care across the province. This year, the newly appointed chair of the committee overseeing this initiative, Dr. Chris Simpson, discussed the rationale behind this initiative and its importance.

"Reducing unwanted clinical practice variation is our goal," said Dr. Simpson, a cardiologist and vice-dean of medicine at Queen's University, Kingston. He noted that physicians resist "cookbook medicine" and he acknowledged that clinical care is "full of nuance" but he said physicians have an obligation to support standards that match the best treatments to patients

Delegates also heard Health Minister Dr. Eric Hoskins and deputy minister Dr. Bob Bell support the work being undertaken by Health Quality Ontario and those committed to building a quality system as well as reinforcing the commitment to patient involvement. Dr. Hoskins presented the Minister's Medal Honouring Excellence in Health Quality and Safety, which for the first time this year had a category for patients, families and caregivers which was awarded to Margo Twohig, co-chair of the Patient and Family Advisory Council at North York General Hospital.

Throughout the conference, speakers, starting with Dr. Tepper who was joined by Gail Paech, CEO of Associated Medical Services, featured the Change Day Ontario initiative which encourages all who work in, or are touched by, the health care system to make a pledge to improve the system or their own care.

"The conversation is the only thing you are going to remember about Health Quality Transformation." Ontario Medical Association President Dr. Shawn Whatley told attendees attending one session at the conference. Judging by the intense discussions and networking inside and outside of the days' sessions and on Twitter, the comment seemed to accurately reflect a core element for the meeting's success.

Next year's Health Quality Transformation conference will be held Oct. 17.