

Sharing perspectives leads to shared solutions

As chairs of the Specialist Services Committee (SSC), co-chaired by the BCMA and Ministry of Health, we sit at a unique table in terms of shared leadership. The SSC provides a distinct opportunity to examine some of the current issues facing specialists and their patients in BC and find solutions that work for all.

Although the objectives of the Ministry of Health and the BCMA can sometimes be very different, the bipartite committees like the SSC and the General Practice Services Committee focus efforts on patient care, which serves as a great unifying force. We have to come to the table prepared to listen and to get to a shared understanding so that we can make a shared plan. That is the essence of collaboration. The success comes from the fact that we work together.

Over the past 2 years the SSC has learned a great deal about what collaboration means through the process of selecting and supporting projects of the SSC Quality and Innovation Fund. The fund offered one-time funding to facilitate innovation and system change initiatives led by specialist physicians to improve the quality of specialist care access for patients, as well as improve the efficiency of care.

Specialists from a wide array of disciplines and from many different geographic areas identified issues and challenges, collaborated with their colleagues (and in some cases regions and health authorities) to come up with creative and innovative ideas to address those challenges, taking the

time and effort to submit proposals. Witnessing the enthusiasm, energy, and cooperation with which various physicians tackled these projects has been extraordinary (many of them have contributed a huge amount of their own time in addition to the SSC funding).

Out of all the submissions, 21 were selected to be funded for a total of \$8 million. Some are just getting off the ground while others are nearing completion. While each initiative has its own set of goals, the long-term vision is to improve the quality of patient care and more efficiently provide services through system innovation.

The information learned by the committee during this process is now being applied to our 2013/2014 work plan.

One of the key findings is that the proposals that have the greatest amount of buy-in, including support and partnerships with health authorities to achieve mutual aims, have the greatest potential for sustainability and long-term system improvements.

Guiding the process

All of the SSC-funded projects are guided by the Institute of Health Improvement Triple Aim objectives: improve the health of a defined population, enhance the patient and provider experiences of care, and reduce or at least control the per capita cost of care.

The SSC initiatives also support the following additional objectives:

- Address care gaps.
- Improve collaborative processes.
- Improve and support patient engagement.
- Encourage efficiency.
- Identify and achieve measurable outcomes.

The majority of the 21 funded projects were grouped into four key thematic areas:

- Multidisciplinary clinics to enhance care of a specific patient population, such as projects focusing on patients with inherited arrhythmias, musculoskeletal needs, prostate cancer, and youth with chronic conditions transitioning into adult care.
- Enhanced use of information technology, such as telehealth projects, a surgical booking project, and other EMR-related projects.
- Surgical care best practices and performance benchmarking, such as hip-fracture benchmarks, operating room efficiencies, and expanding the Enhanced Recovery After Colorectal Surgery best practices.
- Training and professional development, such as skills enhancement in airway management and various bedside ultrasound uses.

Initiatives like these—and the cooperation and collaboration that they entail—make us excited about the future of speciality care in BC. We will be profiling these various projects in the future. But we still need to hear specialists' voices regarding care gaps and care solutions. We want specialists to come to us with issues and partner with us to find solutions. We can't find the right solution alone.

For more information about the SSC Quality and Innovation Fund, please visit www.ssebc.ca.

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This article is the opinion of the SSC and has not been peer reviewed by the BCMJ Editorial Board.