



Health leaders of tomorrow

“The best way to predict the future is to create it yourself.” — Peter Diamandis

I had the pleasure of speaking at the Vancouver chapter’s Emerging Health Leaders speed mentoring event. This is a national volunteer peer network aimed at developing emerging health system leaders. The panel was made up of an impressive array of leaders, including Dr Victoria Lee, president and CEO of the Fraser Health Authority; Yasmin Jetha, vice president, community services, at the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority; Megan Stowe, executive director of virtual health at the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority; and me, as the sole practising physician.

We spoke about opportunities in today’s health care environment, emerging areas of innovation, and challenges for health care leaders. The audience included a variety of learners hoping to build their connections to health care management and increase their knowledge of current issues. Some were looking for inspiration, others for a deeper understanding of what it takes to be a good leader. The discussions were indeed empowering, and some of the questions that were asked gave me pause to reflect.

What are the most important skills for leaders of our generation?

I could have suggested specific leadership training on collaboration or appreciative inquiry; however, it occurred to me that the most important skill is likely adaptability. How we deliver medicine is going to change exponentially in the next decade. We will live and work in an ever-changing landscape of health care diagnostics, wearable devices, augmented intelligence, advanced decision-making algorithms or chat bots, and the elusive artificial intelligence. The future will see increasing democratization of health care, both in expansion of readily accessible evolving wearable technology and increased access for patients to their own personal health data. This is a daunting prospect for many.

Who should be leading the innovations in health care delivery?

I believe physicians should be at the front of the pack. Physicians will need to decide how to integrate advancing tech and big data into our care systems. Physicians will need to maintain

the balance between technology and the human-to-human connection that our patients desire in planning and receiving their care. Yet the audience, composed of enthusiastic future health leaders, was devoid of young physicians.

Doctors of BC has set the stage for stronger physician engagement. More opportunities exist today than ever before to become leaders at all levels of our health care system, whether with divisions of family practice, or facility engagement, or Doctors of BC committees. I believe we must find a way to energize and inspire more physicians to pick up the torch, lean in to opportunities to lead, and be part of the evolution of care.

Optimal patient outcomes begin with optimal physician engagement. Physicians are an often untapped resource, and the need for our participation has never been greater. It is time to step up and become the leaders our health care system will need in the future.

—Kathleen Ross, MD
Doctors of BC President

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