

A first for health care education

A collaboration between the Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences and the University Health Network (UHN) aims to improve health care education across Ontario. The new Toronto-based program, dubbed The Michener Institute of Education at UHN, is the first educational institution embedded within a hospital network in Canada.

“It’s really an opportunity like none other, where you have clinical practice, research and education all together in a very dynamic, real-time way,” said Maureen Adamson, former CEO of Michener.

Adamson played a large role in implementing the integration, which officially took place in January. She said the project is designed to address the current and future demands of health care and apply an agile and responsive curriculum to train health technologists as quickly as technology, research and clinical practice evolve.

Dr. Brian Hodges, executive vice president of education at UHN, is responsible for the academic program for the Michener integration. He said, “What’s different is that there are more opportunities for students and teachers right in the hospital where the teaching is in progress.”

Health care professionals have the opportunity to contribute to the development of Michener’s curriculum, and teachers can be closer to their practices. Hospital employees will also have the opportunity to engage in continuing education programs.

Hodges said the program is closing the gap between theoretical and practical education, which traditionally are years apart. “Students have exposure to patients on the first day and are able



Courtesy of Dr. Brian Hodges

A new health education program is closing the gap between theoretical and practical education, says Dr. Brian Hodges.

to move back and forth between the classroom and clinic.” Hodges said this not only gives students experience and more familiarity with clinical practice, but it also reduces orientation later on.

“The integration gives more opportunities for real-time learning in a clinical setting and gives UHN the opportunity to guide the education of Michener students who could be working there in the future,” said Amanda Betts, a genetics technology student who recently finished her program at Michener.

Betts said students have smaller opportunities to gain experience during the year instead of waiting for their big clinical placement a few years later. She also said that educators have more access to research being done at UHN

instead of having to wait for hospitals to share their research before they can teach it to students.

The Michener integration was inspired by the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, which pioneered a model in which educational institutions and hospitals work together to meet patient and health system needs.

In a 2010 *Lancet* study, health professionals around the world called for a redesign of professional health education. The study said professional education hasn’t kept pace with health care challenges largely due to “fragmented, outdated, and static curricula that produce ill-equipped graduates.”

“The Mayo Clinic was able to rapidly adapt the education system to the changing health care system,” Hodges said. “Education should be adaptive to the changing health care system and we have the opportunity to create a place strong in innovation.”

Although inspired by the Mayo Clinic, Adamson said Michener is a “made-in-Ontario Mayo Clinic” based on an evolving Canadian model, developed specifically for the Canadian health system.

In this model, Adamson said, “We can create curriculum very quickly based on research and on the clinical practices that exist — to enhance those clinical practices through an educational vehicle and diffuse that across the province.”

“Being attached to a world-class teaching hospital — there’s no college in Ontario like that. We are it.” — Zoe Chong, *CMAJ*

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