

# EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Interprofessional education is a critical part of medical training, equipping students with the confidence and skills necessary for collaboration with a variety of healthcare professionals. Across Canada, many health professional programs have recognized the value of this training and have developed courses to educate their students on these important skills. In recent years, many universities have started sponsoring faculty-student collaborative clinics to help educate students in a realistic setting while filling healthcare gaps within the community.

At Dalhousie University, a group of interprofessional students have been working tirelessly for the past few years to launch the Halifax Outreach Prevention Education Support (HOPES) Health Centre. The HOPES Health Centre held its inaugural clinic in February 2017, and is now operating regularly, both at St. Andrew's Church and at the Dalhousie Health Services clinic. Currently, these two locations offer different tiers of care provided by a variety of health professional students from Dalhousie University, Mount Saint Vincent University, and the Medavie Health Education program. The HOPES Health Centre opened with the goal of contributing to the "Halifax community by delivering sustainable and accessible interprofessional health and social services." Braydon Connell (a second-year Dalhousie medical student), Co-Executive Director for the HOPES Health Centre, says their vision is to "deliver a complementary service to support and engage patients, without replacing current healthcare services."

Interprofessional students involved with the HOPES Health Centre often find that it provides a more enriched learning experience than written simulations. The environment facilitates students working and learning together in a real patient care setting while developing an appreciation for the skills that each discipline offers. The HOPES Health Centre is run by over 175 students from nine health profession programs and offers services including counselling, medication reviews, mental health screening/support, health promotion, social work, physical examinations, and many more—all under faculty supervision. No appointment, health card, or ID is required to receive care at the HOPES Health Centre, which welcomes access by many patients who do not have the funds for replacement or a permanent address required to get a health card. In the future, the directors of the initiative hope to involve other programs, such as physiotherapy, while continuing to advocate for increased community involvement. Their major goal is to expand the services provided by the program into the greater Halifax area.

Walk in Our Shoes Foot Care Clinic is another non-profit clinic in Halifax operated by an interdisciplinary team that includes health professionals and students. The clinic is currently overseen by Dr. Colin Van Zoost (Dalhousie MD '09) and was started in the 1990s in conjunction with Dalhousie University. The objective of the clinic is to provide care to homeless

and low income patients who are unable to receive care elsewhere and are known to be at risk for many preventable illnesses. One of Dr. Van Zoost's goals is to help students develop skills in providing patient care in an interprofessional environment, without the hierarchy that exists in many healthcare institutions today. Educating students on the impact of poverty and the importance of recognizing vulnerable populations, while trying to dispel the negative attitudes that some patients have developed towards the healthcare system, are key objectives.

Every week at the foot care clinic, volunteers provide free health services to patients including foot care, blood pressure assessment, glucose testing, and vision screening. Donations of socks and shoes, through partnerships with local businesses such as Aerobics First, have allowed the clinic to provide properly sized footwear to many patients who often have ill-fitting and worn shoes. Approximately 80% of patients treated at the clinic regularly return for monthly follow-up; more than 50% have a diagnosis of diabetes mellitus, and many do not have a regular family physician. On an average Sunday, approximately 10 volunteers treat 15-20 patients as they rotate through medical stations for screening and treatment in St. Andrew's Church. In the past five years, the clinic has expanded and now reaches more patients in the Halifax Regional Municipality by dispatching a mobile team to nearby communities in Mulgrave Park and Eastern Passage. Experienced volunteers place a strong emphasis on teaching at the clinic, allowing students to benefit from a variety of educational sessions and workshops. In the upcoming year, Dr. Van Zoost plans to continue the clinic's work in communities outside of Halifax with the goal of expanding to include other underserved locations.

Such student involvement in interprofessional initiatives across Halifax is encouraging, as it indicates a movement in healthcare education towards a more patient-centered, team approach. Furthermore, emphasis on serving the needs of the community is facilitating improved access to healthcare services in the area. As students and health professionals, we need to support such projects that foster interprofessional collaboration, mentorship, student leadership, and improvements in patient care. Contributing to these important initiatives can be as simple as volunteering time with a clinic, providing financial assistance, or spreading the word within our community. By celebrating our colleagues' achievements, we can continue to encourage the development of community-based programs that highlight interprofessional collaboration and aim to improve the health of our communities.

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