More than Pushing Paper

By Dr. Lynne Harrigan, Vice President Medicine and Integrated Health Services

I am on an inpatient ward at 3 AM. One of my patients has become acutely short of breath and is in significant respiratory distress. As I am managing the case, my brain is many steps ahead. I am planning the emergency intubation, the transfer to ICU, the discussion with the family over the sudden turn of events, and the probable cancellation of my office the next day. Many of you have either lived through this scenario or can appreciate what it means to be on the front lines as a physician. This is what our training has prepared us to do.

I am seated at a table with policy makers, members of the public, representatives from government, universities, and allied health and we are being asked to set the direction for health care and its delivery. As I sit at that table, my mind is also racing ahead. Is this the right direction to proceed? Does Nova Scotia have the resources to support this? Do we have the courage to make this decision and follow through? It is less common for physicians to be in this scenario and not many physicians have received the training that is required to function well at those tables. The decisions made at these tables in many ways are as important as what I was doing at 3 AM.

Although we all can appreciate and understand the work with the patient who is short of breath, we often do not appreciate the physicians who work in leadership positions who are trying to revive health care in Nova Scotia.

When I was a full time practicing internist, I held the confidence of my patients and work colleagues. They understood what I was doing and we were all part of the same team. In my leadership position, I frequently get asked if I enjoy working on the “dark side” or if I like sitting at a desk in front of a computer all day. The recognition that physician leadership positions are integral to the success of a health system is absent.

So here’s what I think. While it is vital to reach out and to understand what it is like to be working on the front lines, it is equally important for front line physicians to try to understand and appreciate the work that physician leaders do. In the last year, the Canadian Society for Physician Leaders released a white paper called “Accepting Our Responsibility” which outlines the critical importance physician leaders can and must play in Canada. This is important work and the physician voice is essential in the running of a health system.

I encourage those of you who are interested in leadership positions to continue to pursue that goal and I ask that all of you try to support and appreciate the difficult work of your physician leaders.
Accreditation Summary

By Janet Knox, CEO

I would like to offer my sincere thank you to physicians involved in this month’s accreditation visit. Your commitment to your work and quality patient care was clearly demonstrated to the surveyors as they travelled across the province.

We appreciate your willingness and enthusiasm in showing our visitors the high-quality care and service you deliver every day and to share our collective successes. This survey provided us with an excellent opportunity to gain an understanding of what we do well and what we can do better.

The survey team saw first-hand the progress we have made as an organization while still recognizing we have much work ahead of us.

The strengths they highlighted included:

- achieving the organization’s survey goals;
- enormous progress in a short period of time;
- commitment of dedicated staff, physicians, and volunteers to patient and family-centered care;
- courageous and resilient leadership throughout the organization;
- strong community partnerships and relationships;
- our solid vision for the future of health and wellness in Nova Scotia.

Surveyors identified a number of areas for improvement, which will serve as a roadmap for our ongoing quality improvement plan. Some of these should not be surprising as we have been hearing these themes in our ongoing conversations with physicians. They include:

- strengthen patient and family-centered engagement;
- build on public and community engagement / partnerships;
- infrastructure and resource challenges;
- further integration and standardization across the organization;
- celebrate our successes and tell our story;
- advance health services planning;
- focus on our people, the pace of change, and our resiliency.

A detailed written report and accreditation rating will arrive soon. The preliminary results of the survey show that we met most of the 4014 quality and safety standards. We are committed to moving forward and building on these results as we continue our focus on quality and improvement.

NSHA Medical Leadership Retreat

By Chelsea Millen, Medical Affairs

Twice a year, NSHA's senior physician leaders take part in a leadership retreat to develop their leadership skills, build relationships, work on shared issues, and receive and share information about NSHA's strategic directions and the work of the Medical Affairs portfolio. This is part of the work we do on behalf of the organization to build leadership competency and engage physicians. NSHA has 191 physician leaders who work to represent you in administrative work and decision making.

The next leadership retreat is in Sydney, Nova Scotia, on November 2–3 at the Membertou Trade and Convention Centre.

The event will begin with a keynote address from NSHA CEO Janet Knox and Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness Denise Perret on The Role of Leadership in System Change. There will be an education session on managing conflict, and key updates will be shared on the work done since the last retreat to address identified gaps and issues with topics like governance and decision making, performance feedback and measurement, leadership development and communication.

The retreat will conclude with an open space breakout session on topics that reflect themes of concern for physicians, including:

- Decision making and navigation
- Recruitment
- Open topic: what keeps you up at night?

Ask your Department Head, Site Lead, Program Director, or ZEMD if they attended, and what they found most valuable. And feel free to follow along on Twitter @NSPLR.

Healthier Together

By NSHA Communications

Healthier Together is the NSHA’s roadmap to build, grow, and shape our organization and to engage Nova Scotians in creating a healthier future together. NSHA leadership has identified a number of priority areas and key action items for 2017-18.
Plan Provincial, Deliver Local. We will continue to work together to ensure we have a system that looks at the needs of the people we serve and delivers the best health and wellness services for everyone in Nova Scotia. Improving access, care and service delivery in core areas such as primary health care, mental health and addictions, home care, cancer care and orthopedic surgery, is critical to our success.

Invest in safe, quality care. We must invest in the areas that support the delivery of safe, quality care – our buildings, technology, processes and structures – and most importantly - our workforce.

Leadership development, Healthy workplace. We remain committed to improving physician and employee experience through leadership development, engagement and role clarity as we all have a vested interest in creating a healthier workplace. I encourage you to review the 2017-18 priority areas and action items to see how they link to your work and our strategic plan. Many teams across the province are already discussing and taking action on this work and we will continue to reach out as we move forward. We will be sharing quarterly reports on our progress.

Engagement. Healthcare matters to all Nova Scotians. We will provide information and opportunities for physicians as well as the public, stakeholders, and staff to be part of conversations about how we can evolve our health system so that it works today and into the future. As part of those efforts, we will be moving forward with the next phase of our public engagement strategy. We will be sharing more about that soon.

Janet Knox will be holding virtual town halls in each zone in the coming weeks to the end of November. These are opportunities to have your questions answered about the priorities, upcoming engagement opportunities and other topics that are on your mind. Information about these town halls will be shared by your Zone Medical Executive Director.

Western Zone – Dr. Alenia Kysela
Central Zone – Dr. Mark Taylor
Northern Zone – Dr. Nicole Boutilier
Eastern Zone – Dr. Warren Wilkes

Family Doctors Recognized by NS College of Family Physicians

Nova Scotia Health Authority attended the annual Family Medicine Conference as a sponsor/exhibitor. It was a great way to connect with family physicians and to share news about new efforts to communicate with doctors in Nova Scotia. We received lots of great feedback from family doctors that we will continue to embed in our efforts to improve communication.

During the conference, the following doctors received awards from the college. We congratulate all on these achievements.

Dr. David Abriel (posthumous) - Dr. Charles and Mrs. Jean Gass Lifetime Achievement Award  
Dr. Frances Moriarty – 2017 Family Physician of the Year  
Dr. Jock Murray – Award of Excellence  
Dr. Samuel Hickcox – Award of Excellence  
Dr. Tim Holland – Award of Excellence

Next year’s event will be on October 19, 2018 and NSHA will be in attendance again.

Dr. Ward Patrick named Ward 5 Specialist of the Year by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons

This award recognizes Fellows of the Royal College who have made significant contributions in providing outstanding care to their patients and the community in which they practice. The nominee must be a role model for excellence in patient care. The award is open to all Fellows of the Royal College working in any practice setting (e.g., private practice, community, academic).

For more information on the award, visit:  
http://www.royalcollege.ca/

Don’t forget your flu vaccine!
More than Medicine
Physician Recruitment Update
By Wendy Walters, Physician Relations

On October 20-21, NSHA headed to the BMJ Careers Fair in London. With more than 1800 physicians who are highly motivated to take advantage of our unique provincial license agreements for physicians in the UK, we hoped for a great reception. We were met with a welcome beyond our expectations.

It was the first event we have attended where we brought support for physicians on the topics of licensing and immigration. We hosted a session on working as a physician in Nova Scotia and more than 40 doctors attended. Our table buzzed with activity and our guests had the most questions.

We are hoping this event will follow with some great news.

For more information, view Lynne’s video about our experience here: https://vimeo.com/240752398

New Number for Physicians
One of the most common frustrations we hear from physicians is not knowing who to contact for what. You also tell us about the lack of local decision making, which – while it is common in a changing organizational structure – is slowing down things that need to be done. Work is underway to create a decision making framework but in the meantime, we have heard it loud and clear: you need something now!

Physicians with a question or issue can now call the toll free number below to help navigate through the system. This line will be for physicians only. Those calling the line may expect to reach a person or a voicemail with a 24 hour response time during Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. Medical Affairs will be hiring a staff person to assist with this work. Starting on November 15th, physicians can call: 1-833-876-1224

MAiD Program Update
By Dr. Lynne Harrigan, Vice-President Medicine and Integrated Health Services

Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) has been available in Canada since June 2016. NSHA has had a small and dedicated cadre of physicians from the outset who have helped to iron out many of the details of implementing MAiD across Nova Scotia. Over time, we have seen an increase in the number of physicians participating in MAiD, however, we need more physicians to become involved.

Whether you choose to assess your own patient or wish to be involved more broadly in the entire process, we could use your help.

NSHA now has a MAiD coordinator, John McCarthy, who is helping to make the process seamless. NSHA, though the assistance of our physician early adopters, can provide education and mentoring for any interested physicians. NSHA is committed to providing what is a legal service in Canada in all parts of our province. We encourage all physicians to consider becoming involved. If you are interested or have any questions about how you may become involved, please contact John.McCarthy@nshealth.ca.

Welcoming Dr. Warren Wilkes

Dr. Warren Wilkes is the new Zone Medical Executive Director for Eastern Zone. Dr. Wilkes will be located in Sydney at Cape Breton Regional Health Center. Many thanks to Dr. Jeremy Hillyard who provided valued leadership to the zone.

What are you looking forward to most about this new position? Making a positive impact for physician wellbeing and excellence in healthcare for all Eastern Zone communities.

What is your favourite past-time? Music & hockey

What is your favourite travel destination? The beaches of the Atlantic Ocean from Inverness, Nova Scotia to South Florida.

What career did you most want as a child? I always wanted to be a physician like my father.

What is your fondest career memory thus far? Having a COPD patient express his gratitude that I “gave his life back to him” through Pulmonary rehabilitation with a hand-carved and inscribed wooden pen.