



LIGHTHOUSE**NOW**

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South Shore Health considers future vision

by Paula LEVY

COUNTY - A message of patience and sharing a common vision was recently presented to South Shore Health's board of directors. Primary health care director Todd Leader asked the board to envision a future where all South Shore residents had access to a local family physician who is easily accessible and able to address several issues in one appointment. He said at that appointment, patients would be consistently getting the same messages.

"Regardless of your health status, regardless of whether you're healthy or ill, you're constantly being coached and supported on a regular basis to deal with the big issues that really determine health or that cause illness," said Mr. Leader.

He said those messages would be to stop smoking, get physically active, eat properly, manage a healthy weight and eliminating or limiting alcohol consumption.

"People would regularly have those conversations when they're going for their appointments," said Mr. Leader, noting patients would be referred for educational programming in their own communities to help in their quest for a healthier lifestyle.

"It would encourage you to take responsibility for your own health by trying to promote behaviour change, lifestyle change, teach you how to change what you do so that you recognize that you actually have great power to control and dictate the future of your health," said Mr. Leader.

"What I have just described is what the reality of primary health care is supposed to be," said Mr. Leader. "The beautiful part is, we are already well on our way. ... This is the current work of South Shore Health."

He noted that currently there are five collaborative health care teams within South Shore Health and as time goes on, more and more collaborate practices will be created.

"We are building these collaborative teams. The entire process by which all these people are working, is very much about this team concept. ... We have made enormous progress in the last few years," said Mr. Leader. "I guarantee you, you will see dramatic additions to these teams over the next couple of years."

He noted the Department of Health has agreed to offer alternative payment plans as a recruitment tool to replace any physician who is planning to leave the area.

"We will be able to convert their funding into the kind of funding that the new grads coming out want," said Mr. Leader. "We have permission in principal to assume that we can make that conversion and to assume that we can start to post that vacancy and recruit for that vacancy before the doctor is gone instead of after the fact."

In addition, Mr. Leader said South Shore Health's management style needs to change to empower employees at all levels to be able to make decisions which contribute to reaching primary health care goals.

"We're looking to develop a consistent kind of approach that really is about a collective type of management of what we do; everybody steering the ship," he said.

Mr. Leader also called on the board of directors to consider the primary health care vision in every decision it makes.

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