

Health Sciences North 2021 Annual General Meeting

Report from the Chair,
Patient and Family Advisory Council

Jessica Grenier



Health Sciences North
Horizon Santé-Nord

hsnsudbury.ca

Report from the Chair, Patient and Family Advisory Council
Jessica Grenier
Annual General Meeting – June 16, 2021

It's my pleasure to present to you the progress that the Patient and Family Advisory program has made over the past year and to highlight Health Sciences North (HSN) and Health Sciences North Research Institute (HSNRI) in its continued commitment to engage with patients and their families to ensure that we remain the focus of all that HSN does.

Although the pandemic meant that Patient and Family Advisory Council meetings, committees, and other collaborative activities were no longer being held onsite, this did not mean that the work could not continue. There continues to be multiple, valuable roles for Patient and Family Advisors, particularly at this time. Thankfully, the use of technology has provided Patient and Family Advisors the opportunity to remain engaged and have meaningful input into decision making and improvement opportunities.

Since joining the Patient and Family Advisory Council following my experiences with NEO Kids for my youngest son and my own experiences with the cancer center and cardiac unit, I have had the pleasure of working directly with HSN staff and leadership. I have provided insight and recommendations to both the 2019-2024 Strategic Planning Steering Committee and also the Capital Master Planning Committee. My participation at both Incident Command and Operations throughout this pandemic has been very well received. Offering the Patient and Family perspective using a truly diverse lens has proven valuable when considering implementation of changes and rapid decisions. I will continue to participate and advocate when and where I can to ensure patients and families remain at the center of all decisions made at HSN.

Patient and Family Advisors make a difference as we bring a different perspective to the table. HSN remains committed to partnering with patients and families to improve the quality and safety of care and overall patient experience. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, patients and families continued to partner with HSN by way of telephone and virtual communication towards the implementation of the 2019-2024 HSN/HSNRI Strategic Plan.

The voice of the patient and family carried throughout improvement initiatives related to each of our five key goals:

Be Patient and Family focused:

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Patient and Family Advisors continued to partner with HSN as members of HSN's Incident Command and Operations teams. Lauri Petz and I take part in these meetings virtually, providing input and decision-making at a senior level on issues related to policies, procedures and communications. Our voices ensure a balance between HSN's responsibility to keep patients, families and staff safe during the pandemic while maintaining a patient and family centred approach.

Our members also assisted in planning point of entry screening for COVID-19, Recovery Planning and served on HSN's Designated Care Partner working group.

Maintaining connections between patients and families is vital to health and healing. Yet to prevent the spread of the virus, HSN had to understandably reduce the physical presence of families and others. Over the past year, Patient and Family Advisors Debbie Rainville, Lauri Petz and I partnered with

members of HSN's leadership team to develop the new Designated Care Partner Policy for the organization. In those discussions, we helped to convey the essential role of families and care partners and established ways for patients to remain connected to their loved ones.

In the Spring 2020, Patient and Family Advisor Nick Dominelli joined the Space Design Planning team who's focus was to develop a plan to create space for patients in the Emergency Department who were waiting to be seen or treated. Nick and the team looked at waiting room configurations and capacity to ensure alignment with Ministry guidelines with respect to physical distancing requirements that would help support the business recovery planning.

Be Digitally Enabled

Throughout the pandemic, HSN has expanded the use of technology to help improve access to care for patients and families, as well as improve patient outcomes. Patient and Family Advisors were closely involved in several important initiatives related to this work.

There were thousands of patients coming through HSN's main entrance each week, all of whom required to be screened for COVID-19. In order to address issues related to line-ups and delays, HSN staff worked with Patient and Family Advisors Hom Shrestha and Sandra Foley to co-design a new virtual screening tool. Patients and their designated care partners can now self-screen prior to their visit to the hospital, thereby reducing wait times to gain access to the facility.

On December 15, 2020, HSN launched the first Virtual Emergency Department in Northern Ontario. Input from Patient and Family Advisor Julie Sabourin assigned to this project was invaluable in ensuring that the process was simple, user friendly and convenient for the average person who could benefit from Virtual Care. A total of 1187 patients have been seen in HSN's Virtual Emergency Department since December 2020. This service has enabled increased convenience and accessibility for patients and families, while reducing the risk of potential exposure and spread of illnesses among patients seeking critical and urgent care in our community.

In October 2020, Patient and Family Advisors Andrea Desjardins and Kristen Bouchard worked with the Mental Health and Addictions program to co-design a Virtual Care Video for patients and families. The video provides an understanding of the benefits and risks of virtual care. In addition to the video, a virtual care toolkit was developed for mental health and addictions staff to guide them in the delivery of virtual care with their patients and families.

Throughout the pandemic, HSN expanded the use of virtual technology to allow for patients and families to continue sharing their experience through story telling. Andrea Desjardins shared her and her son's experience with the Quality Committee of the Board and during HSN's Medical Learner/Resident Onboarding sessions to help emphasize the importance of patient-centred care and the need for integrating diversity and inclusion to improve care and enhance the overall patient experience.

Be Socially Accountable

HSN remains committed to seek community engagement and value partnerships with community stakeholders to address the priority health concerns and health equity gaps for Northerners. Earlier this past year, HSN employees in conjunction with Patient and Family Advisor Rita O'Link created a documentary emphasizing the impact of inclusivity for the 2SLGBTQ community. In September 2020, the documentary was presented at Towards Unity for Health, an international organization that seeks to foster coordination and collaboration between communities, health systems, and academic institutions,

to build capacity for universal access and equitable health care.

In October 2020, HSN also launched a new “2SLGBTQ + Diversity and Inclusivity Training Self - Learning Package”. HSN leaders, community partners and Patient and Family Advisors Rita O’Link, Darlyn Hansen and Andrea Desjardins helped to co-design a self-learning package for staff to include HSN policies, terminology, gender identity, unintended consequences of non-inclusive practices and areas for improvement in the patient experience.

Strengthen our Academic and Research Impact

Patient and Family Advisors John Fraser and Lissa Gagnon remain members of HSN’s Research Ethics Board. The Research Ethics Board is responsible for the ethical assessment and approval of research involving human participants, as well as promoting the ethical conduct of research at HSN, HSNRI and St Joseph’s Health Centre of Sudbury. Patient and Family Advisor Samantha Kuula also serves as a member of HSNRI Board’s Research Committee.

Patient engagement in decisions on how research should be conducted, and what type of research should be performed, is increasingly becoming a requirement to receive funding for proposed projects. As such, researchers are looking to receive input from patients on their proposals before submitting to funding agencies. It is likely that this relationship will continue to evolve as the valuable advice from our Patients and Family Advisors is increasingly recognized.

I would like to thank my fellow Patient and Family Advisors for all of their hard work and dedication to the continuous pursuit to improve the quality of care and service; and enhance the overall health care experience for others.

Let me conclude by also acknowledging the members of the Patient and Family Advisory Council who served this past year:

Andrea Desjardins
John Fraser
Darlyn Hansen
Jill Kirwan
Lauri Petz
Debbie Rainville
Bradley Rietze
Leslie Steel
Kimberly Wagg
Dr. Peter Zalan

Our collective efforts and passion for excellent patient and family health care experiences will continue to be our driving force as we work together with HSN staff and leadership well into the future.

Thank you.