Medical Recruitment in Cornwall ~ 2010
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Introduction

In 2000, the Mayor of the day struck a Task Force on Medical Recruitment to address the shortage of Physicians and Consultants (formerly called Specialists). From that task force evolved both funding and a medical recruitment team with a mandate of working with both government and other agencies in seeking out and securing physicians for Cornwall.

Recruitment team members consist of Dr. Michael Cox, a retired Family Physician, who provides Cornwall Community Hospital (CCH) liaison and professional support, Ms. Karen Heuer, a Human Resources recruiter for the Hospital, and Michael Metcalfe, a former City Development Officer who provides marketing and logistical support. The team also enjoys periodic support from community physicians.

Challenge

Cornwall, like close to 150 communities across Ontario, has a shortage of Physicians. While the City’s complement of Consultants is relatively complete, there remains an acute shortage of Family Physicians (GP/FP). The current need is for a minimum of six to nine Family Practitioners. Regrettably, Cornwall has lost four Family Physicians during the past year and another two are expected to leave practice in the next two years.

To put the local shortage into context, the current shortfall of GP/FP’s in Canada is estimated at 5,000 and in Ontario, roughly 3,000. However, with its relatively full complement of Consultant Physicians, Cornwall is faring better than many of its provincial counterparts.

Year in Review

2010 was a productive year for the team. Recruitment venues included Montreal in February, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Kingston, Hamilton, London and Toronto in September, and Sudbury in October. As a result of these activities, coupled with an on-line presence with Health Force Ontario and other sources, it was contacted by a number of Family and Consultant Physicians. Selected ones were invited to Cornwall and given a comprehensive tour of the City’s health care facilities along with an opportunity to meet with their professional peers. While some are considering a practice in Cornwall, they will likely continue to look at options in other Ontario communities as well.
The Results

While acquiring GP/FP’s remain a challenge, the team secured a Psychiatrist, two Emergency Physicians, an Anaesthetist and two Internists (one specific to weekend locums). In addition, the team assisted both the Centre de Santé Communautaire and the Seaway Valley Community Health Centre in securing Family Physicians.

Other Recruitment Initiatives

Medical Scholarship

In 2008, Council approved the creation of a scholarship for medical students in Cornwall and the United Counties. The scholarship, in the amount of $25,000 per year for six years, is awarded to a student accepted into or currently studying at a recognized Canadian medical school. The scholarship was created as a long-term investment in securing Family Physicians for Cornwall.

The first recipient, Vanessa Carter, is in her second year of medical studies at the University of Ottawa. The scholarship committee has reviewed the 2010 applications, offered the scholarship to its candidate of choice, and is awaiting confirmation. Under the terms of the scholarship, candidates, upon completion of their studies and earning College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) certification, will set up a permanent practice in Cornwall for a period of not less than five years.

Community Week

The Eastern Regional Medical Education Program (ERMEP) is an initiative designed to help first year medical students gain exposure to smaller communities. Funded by the Ministry of Health & Long Term Care, its mandate is to coordinate student placements in Eastern Ontario with a view to encouraging a practice in one of them upon graduation and certification.

Each year for the past four years, Cornwall’s medical recruitment team brings 14 first year students from the University of Ottawa to Cornwall where they spend a week with a number of Physicians in selected specialties. The student schedules are organized and coordinated by Dr. Bob Reddoch with cooperation from local Physicians who support the initiative by acting as preceptors.

The program in Cornwall has enjoyed success with some students returning to the City for extended placements in their third year. Cornwall Community Hospital is now a teaching centre for the University.
That success has not gone unnoticed. According to Dr. Ross McLean, Director of ERMEP, of the close to 50 communities in eastern Ontario to which ERMEP sends students, Cornwall has emerged as the most sought-after site because of the outstanding program it presents.

It is also interesting to note that ERMEP utilizes the ‘Cornwall-model’ as an example of how to effectively integrate first year medical students into the health care system and provide them with a valuable learning experience.

Summary

While the acute shortage of Physicians persists, the City of Cornwall has taken a proactive approach, with an accompanying commitment to recruitment. The medical recruitment team believes that commitment, coupled with an alignment with Cornwall Community Hospital and the partnership with ERMEP, will prove to be a sound investment that ultimately results in some of these visiting medical students choosing the City as a community in which to live and to set up a permanent practice.

That said, much work is still required to bring the number of Family Physicians up to the necessary complement in order to provide the City and surrounding region with adequate Primary Care.

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