

MINISTRY APPOINTS HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENTS CHAMPIONS

April 20, 2009

The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care has appointed two Healthy Work Environments (HWE) “Champions” who will move forward with Ontario’s goal of making this province the ‘employer of choice’ for health care professionals.

The Champions are leaders in their respective fields. They will collaborate with the ministry and other health sector leaders to publicly promote the benefits of HWEs, and provide advice on how best to implement the ministry’s existing strategy to prevent workplace violence and create safe work environments for health care workers.

Healthy Work Environments Champions**Rob Devitt**

Rob Devitt is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Toronto East General Hospital (TEGH). Prior to joining TEGH in 2004, Mr. Devitt was the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Peterborough Regional Health Centre where he led the integration and merger of two separate hospitals and secured government approval for the development of a new replacement hospital.

Mr. Devitt has served in a number of capacities on system transformation and change initiatives. He has been a provincially appointed Supervisor, served on a number of provincial advisory committees and is the Past Chair of the Board for Plexxus, a not-for-profit company focused on maximizing non-clinical efficiencies, including supply chain management, transaction finance, and human resources and payroll services, in order to reinvest savings into patient care.

Dr. Heather Laschinger

Dr. Heather Laschinger is Distinguished University Professor and Associate Director Nursing Research at The University of Western Ontario, School of Nursing, Faculty of Health Sciences in London, Ontario. In 2007, Dr. Laschinger received the Distinguished University Professor Award, Western's highest recognition for a faculty member, in honour of sustained excellence in teaching, research and service during an outstanding scholarly career at the university. Since 1992, Dr. Laschinger has been Principal Investigator of a program of research designed to investigate the impact of nursing work environments on nurses’ empowerment for professional practice, and their health and well-being. This work has resulted in important contributions to policy-making and program development at various levels of government. In 2003 Dr. Laschinger was awarded the Sigma Theta Tau International Elizabeth McWilliams Miller Award for Excellence in Research, the first Canadian researcher to receive this prestigious award.

A major focus of Dr. Laschinger’s research is assessing the impact of nursing work environments on nursing and client outcomes. Much of this work has focused on the role of leadership in creating empowering work environments that support professional practice and promote nurses’ health and well-being. Dr. Laschinger, with Professor Carol Wong, recently completed a national study profiling nursing leadership / management structures across Canada.

Current projects include a provincial study testing a multi-level model of the impact of unit nursing leadership on nurses' worklife and mental and physical health (SSHRC) and a worklife civility intervention study with Dr. Michael Leiter of Acadia University (CIHR).

Healthy Work Environments Strategy

The appointment of the HWE Champions is part of an ongoing strategy to deal with safety issues in healthcare workplaces across Ontario.

Other initiatives under the strategy include:

- Funding has been provided to Toronto East General Hospital to install voice-activated communication safety devices. Testing of the devices determined that they reduced security response times to emergency codes by up to 75%.
- Funding for the Ontario Hospital Association to hold conferences providing guidance on preventing workplace violence. One of the videoconferences held in 2008 was the top download from the Association's website.
- Providing funding to the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario to develop an educational program on interprofessional teamwork bringing together nurses, doctors, and other health care workers to improve respect in the workplace and to deliver improved patient care.
- Funding has been provided to the Ontario Branch of Victorian Order of Nurses to develop education sessions to raise awareness and understanding of violence prevention in the home care sector.
- Funding a teleconference and 14 educational sessions on violence prevention, held by the Ontario Safety Association for Community & Healthcare. The teleconference alone attracted over 2,000 participants from more than 400 hospitals and long-term care organizations.
- Funding the Ontario Health Quality Council's work on developing a framework for assessing healthy work environments.