



Lamont Health Care Centre

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P.O. Box 479, 5216-53 Street, Lamont, Alberta T0B



2011 COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER – WINTER EDITION

'MEDICAL CORNER'

Importance of the Family Doctor

by Dr. Zainool Mohamed, Chief of Medical Staff - LHCC

I would like to take the opportunity to discuss the importance of the Family Doctor with regards to patient care. In this day and age of instant gratification, we sometimes think that a Family Doctor is unnecessary as there are multiple opportunities to get health care, namely via a Walk-In Clinic, the Emergency Department, as well as with a Pharmacist. However, I feel that I can give you a unique perspective on what the Family Doctor's role is in managing your own medical care.

Firstly, the Family Doctor is the navigator of the Health Care System. This is the one person who knows what specialty would be required for a referral, what test is needed when a person comes in with a complaint, what is the next course of action depending on the investigations which are carried out. The same cannot be said for other health care professionals as they do not do continued follow-up for a particular Patient but may give advice to a patient on a one to one basis.

The second thing is that the Family Doctor is an advocate for the Patient. In actual fact, the Family Doctor is the primary advocate for the Patient. Often times you hear that there are other health care professions that advocate for the Patient, but if you think about it, the Patient voluntarily attends a Family Doctor and then he/she advocates for tests, medications or therapy in order to improve health or to cure illness. I do not know of any other profession that can advance a position to say that they do as good a job of advocating as a Family Doctor.

In terms of treatment, a Family Doctor is there to provide both acute and chronic treatment for any Patient. This treatment can include medications, physical therapy or counseling since there is more than one modality of treatment. Prescription of medication is not the only form of treatment. Following treatment there is always follow-up; follow-up belongs in the realm of the Family Doctor, since he/she is aware of not only the history of the Patient but the Patient's present complaint as well as the resources available to the Patient. Follow-up can be accomplished from a previous examination, transfer from another physician, or from another specialty. At other times, a Patient who has no Family Doctor can only see a doctor in Emergency following surgery for further treatment because this person has no other option. Often times, the doctor in Emergency will change and so patients never get the same level of care that they could receive if they were following up with their own Family Doctor.

Remember that one of the primary concerns of a Family Doctor is ongoing preventative care. This is very well covered on television with shows like Dr. Oz, at the Pharmacy that advertises millions of preventative medications, at the Chiropractor and at the Optometrist; however, in reality, primary prevention which is the realm of the Family Doctor can only occur in the Family Doctors' office. Ongoing preventative care is not a generic salad that can be administered to everybody, but it is a very specific plan for each Patient, depending on one's own circumstance as well as the family history. This personal relationship with the Family Doctor forms a significant bond as compared to a Pharmacist who might not be aware of other significant pieces of information. Many times the Family Doctor is looked upon to answer questions namely from articles in the newspaper or in the media as well as from other family members that Patients may have talked to. Education is also part of the job of the Family Doctor.

Mission Statement

We believe that wholeness of body, mind and spirit is God's will for every person.

We are committed to the healing process, the promotion of health

and the provision of compassionate care to all persons.



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Provision of Emergency Care in the setting of Family Medicine is also an important part of the job that Family Doctors have taken. For instance, if one walks into the clinic and has an Emergency, a good Family Doctor should have the ability to care for the Patient in Emergency as well as in the clinic. At times it may be impossible for the Doctor to leave the office, but he/she should be able to transfer not only information about the Patient but also express his concerns to the Physician who will care for this Patient. If you did not have a Family Doctor as the advocate, this transfer of care would not occur and neither would all the subsequent follow-up.

Each Family Doctor is different; physicians have different skills; although the core training is similar, some doctors take great pains to upgrade their knowledge in different ways. Some learn from their colleagues and others take extensive training programs in other hospitals. However, no two Family Doctors are the same. As well, the training interests vary and this is important when selecting a Family Doctor. One can get very confused in thinking that the job of the Family Doctor is to refill a prescription. In actual fact, every visit is accompanied by a surreptitious examination of the Patient which does not necessarily mean that a blood pressure machine or a stethoscope will be used during that visit. However, the Doctor is aware of the Patient's state.

I once was told by a patient, “while I'm seeing another doctor you may as well just fill in my prescription”. That is in the essence of what a Family Doctor is not. Family Doctors are there to provide care to individual Patients as well as their families; they are not there as purveyors of medications or pushers of drugs. There are many other agencies that can accomplish that. The importance of the Family Doctor is to be there as a guide for health care decisions.

Thank you and have a Merry Christmas!!

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