

News Release

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Bluewater Health's CEEH Celebrates Partnership with Western University

Rural health student rotation seen as critical to physician recruitment efforts

PETROLIA – June 25, 2019 – Today, Bluewater Health's Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital (CEEH) celebrated their long standing partnership with Western University's Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry. After today, patients to the busy emergency department, with approximately 20,000 visits per year, will be greeted by a prominent sign celebrating the partnership.

"This program is an incredible learning experience," said **Dr. Alex Leonard**, a Rural Family Medicine Resident who is originally from Wallaceburg. "As a resident, it gave me the opportunity to learn from some phenomenal doctors, each with their own unique style, who have exclusive clinical responsibilities and teaching with their staff consultants. Through this comprehensive program, they have now become my mentors and colleagues."

In 2010, the partnership began with the inclusion of two residents on rotation and since then, the hospital has trained a total of 18 resident doctors. In fact, upon graduation 50 percent of the residents who intern at CEEH return to either work full time or become actively involved with the hospital in some form; far higher than the program's average retention rate of 33 percent. Many rural communities in Ontario are struggling to recruit new physicians and the Bluewater Health/Western University partnership is a successful recruitment strategy for Petrolia.

The curriculum of the Western program is designed to prepare residents to work in rural settings by ensuring they are competent and capable to practice family medicine in all spheres. The first year of the program aims to develop solid foundations in various electives, including Emergency Medicine, Palliative Care, ICU, and other off-service rotations. The resident spends the majority of their second year placed in a core family practice. This facilitates continuity of care and allows the resident to work as a family physician for a group of patients.

"Bluewater Health is strongly committed to our hospital at CEEH and the town of Petrolia," said **Dr. Michel Haddad**, Bluewater Health's Chief of Staff and Lambton's Regional Academic Director for Schulich Medicine & Dentistry. "Training physicians locally gives them a better understanding of what it is like to practice and live here, including the support and resources available in the community and the Hospital. Petrolia and the Family Health Team have been very progressive to advocate for a local family residency program which was launched in 2011, and Bluewater Health is very proud to support the educational needs of our Petrolia residents during their medical rotations at both Petrolia and Sarnia. We are competing with various communities to recruit physicians. Establishing local training programs, in collaboration with Western's Medical School, increases our community's exposure and chances of recruiting and retaining high caliber physicians who are committed to our community."

The unveiling of the new partnership signage today in Petrolia serves as a constant reminder to local residents, patients and families the shared academic mission, commitment and alignment for both institutions.

It is important to note this program was initially pioneered in 2004 by Central Lambton Family Health Team's **Dr. John Butler** and **Dr. Enoch Daniel**. "Then in 2008, **Dr. Angela Wang** and I took the reigns and, in collaboration with Dr. Butler and Dr. Daniel, negotiated a formal residency program with Schulich which took two years to fully develop," said **Dr.**

Firas Al-Dhafer, Site Director, Petrolia Family Medicine Training Program. “Since then, **Dr. Nathan Taylor** and **Dr. Justin Mall** have also stepped up to take on a bigger role. This has become a passion project for each and every one of us.”

“Rural communities offer rich educational experiences and Petrolia is uniquely suited to provide these opportunities,” said Dr. Al-Dhafer. “We are proud of our long standing partnership with Schulich Medicine & Dentistry and honoured they view Bluewater Health as a clinical teaching site where their residents can learn alongside some amazing local physicians. This is a creative way to showcase our hospital to new physician trainees and have them realize why Petrolia is a great place to live and work.”

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Bluewater Health, with locations in Sarnia and Petrolia, cares for the residents of Sarnia-Lambton. With close to 2,500 staff, Professional Staff and volunteers, Bluewater Health provides an array of specialized acute, complex continuing care, allied health and ambulatory care services. Bluewater Health’s Mission is: *We create exemplary healthcare experiences with patients and families every time.* For more information about Bluewater Health, visit www.bluewaterhealth.ca or follow us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube.

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