

Spotlight on Local Leadership

“Mindfulness in Medicine”

Markham Stouffville, York Central medical societies partner with OMA Physician Health Program

by OMA Regional Engagement Services

IN EARLY 2011, THE MARKHAM STOUFFVILLE MEDICAL SOCIETY EXECUTIVE SURVEYED ITS MEMBERSHIP TO DETERMINE INTERESTS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS. WITH A NEW LEADER IN PLACE, AND A DESIRE TO ENGAGE MORE MEMBERS, THE EXECUTIVE POLLED OVER 400 DOCTORS TO GATHER FEEDBACK ON A VARIETY OF POTENTIAL TOPICS. CONTINUING A TREND SEEN IN OTHER AREAS OF THE PROVINCE, A WORKSHOP FROM THE OMA PHYSICIAN HEALTH PROGRAM (PHP) WAS IDENTIFIED AS A PREFERRED OPTION.

Joining forces with its neighbouring territorial division — the York Central Medical Society — a co-hosted meeting was held on January 24, 2012. The focus of the event, determined in partnership with the PHP, was “Mindfulness in Medicine.”

In an ever-changing, fast-paced medical environment, physicians need to refocus themselves from time to time in the context of their professional and personal lives.

As OMA District 5 Director Dr. Shawn Whatley explained, “Physicians tend to be quite conservative. The mindfulness presentation was geared to provide a safe environment to learn about something a little different, that seems to show promise for some patients” — as well as physicians.

PHP presenters Ted Bober and Ann Davidson noted, “The essence of the Mindfulness in Medicine workshop is to introduce physicians to evidence-based mindfulness practices.”

These workshops provide an opportunity to enhance physician health and

well-being, as well as improve attention and situational awareness. Participants also learn how to communicate and act skillfully during a difficult clinical encounter, and how to lead with greater openness and flexibility, rather than in a manner that may compromise patient care and team functionality.

Mindfulness is not simply the practice of meditation, although this is one potential component. True mindfulness is also being present in everything that one does throughout the day.

For physicians working in a fast-paced environment, such as the emergency department, operating room, or busy family practice office, it is important to always be present in the moment and not be distracted by extraneous stimuli.

Many physicians at the meeting expressed interest in receiving tips for their patients who may benefit from a calming, centering approach to life.

Dr. Scott Kapoor, an emergency physician in Markham, appreciated the helpful tips, which can be of use to

physicians and patients alike. “After this meeting, I use the STEPP method all the time — Stop, Take a breath, Expand your awareness, Pause, Proceed,” said Dr. Kapoor.

Dr. Brigitte Monrose, a family physician in Markham, appreciated that the workshop provided her with “new information as to what is available through the OMA. I enjoyed the meeting and the enlightening topic of mindfulness. In this stressful type of work, there is definite benefit to be able to calm the mind and focus on the moment.”

All participants benefited in some way from the workshop. Many were impressed by the focus on literature and evidence that underlies the practice of mindfulness, and some participants were inspired to seek advanced information on the topic.

To find out about events in your area, engage with your local physician colleagues, or obtain more information on OMA Regional Engagement Services, please contact info@oma.org, or call 1.800.268.7215. ■