

Collaborative Team Initiative

Derek Jorgenson
SWITCH TEAM



Mending the missing link to optimal patient care

Saskatoon's Student Wellness Initiative Toward Community Health (SWITCH) has been providing health care to the disadvantaged in the community since 2005. Run by students from many University of Saskatchewan healthcare faculties, the clinic has not only helped the depressed west-side community, it has also provided real-world student training.

But, until last year, a crucial component was missing from the initiative—one that prevented the clinic from providing well-rounded primary care: the clinic had no pharmacists on board, limiting its ability to help patients with complex medication issues.

In January 2007, clinical pharmacist **Derek Jorgenson** enlisted, and since then, has been busy recruiting pharmacy students and other practising pharmacists to join the initiative, earning him this year's Commitment to Care & Service Award for Collaborative Team Initiative.

Now, it's not unusual at SWITCH to see senior pharmacy students teaching medical students how to do medical histories on clients. In a testimonial from Saskatoon family physician Kelly Dyck,



Derek Jorgenson (front) and his team

Jorgenson was described as a "great mentor" and "advocate" for the program. Jorgenson's presence also brings his own extensive knowledge of medications and incredible client counselling skills, says the physician. "Derek has a great ability to counsel patients and help them understand why a medication is needed and how it is to be taken," Dyck says.

SWITCH works from the premises of a daytime centre called the Westside Clinic, which opens up to provide clinical, social and health promotion services after the daytime clinic closes on evenings and weekends. The after-hours, drop-in service is run by students in university programs, such as nursing, social work, pharmacy, physiotherapy, psychology and nutrition. Practising professionals mentor the students.

As well as primary health care, SWITCH visitors receive free snacks in the waiting area, vegetables are sold cheap and several health services (e.g., a needle exchange, community kitchen) are provided.

A pharmacist at West Winds Primary Health Care Centre and clinical coordinator for the Saskatoon Health Region

and the Department of Pharmaceutical Services in Saskatoon, Jorgenson became the clinic's first pharmacist mentor. He worked tirelessly to bring students and other pharmacist mentors to the centre by circulating newsletters to pharmacists around the province and giving presentations to students at the University of Saskatchewan.

Jorgenson's recruiting efforts have been so successful that, at a recent shift, pharmacy students outnumbered all other students. This has improved the quality of care because pharmacy students and mentors can help identify prescriptions when patients don't know their proper names, and find alternatives for patients who can't afford to pay for prescriptions. The mentors, meanwhile, educate students and the team's other professionals about the importance of proper prescription use.

The Commitment to Care & Service judges were obviously impressed. "Great leadership initiative," notes one. "Jorgenson showed great initiative to get pharmacy involved and part of the team."

—Frank Armstrong

2008 Commitment to Care & Service awards

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