

Patients at the Centre of Care: A Canadian Solution

Commissions, reports and opinion polls – Canadians spend a great deal of time looking at and thinking about our healthcare system. So, it's probably not surprising that a Canadian vision of the ideal healthcare system was the winner in a prestigious American competition last fall. What is surprising, perhaps, is that the Canadian visionary is a dentist from a small town near Ottawa. Dr. Vaughan Glover's patient-centred proposal to reform Canada's health system was selected to receive the \$10,000 top prize out of over 100 entries submitted from across the U.S.

The contest was sponsored by a Seattle-based healthcare consultant, Kathleen O'Connor, who decided to hold a public contest to look for new ideas in health reform. The submissions were adjudicated by a team of nine judges all of whom are senior healthcare executive and decision makers and well-versed in health services policy. Entrants included university professors, physicians, lawyers, accountants, retirees and homemakers – all of whom had strong opinions on how to fix the American healthcare system.

Yet, Dr. Glover's submission with its emphasis on putting patients at the centre of the system was deemed the most revolutionary. As Glover explains, whether it's Canada or the U.S., "the system is in trouble and we need to stop trying to fix the symptoms. It is time to design a system around health, rather than expecting people to compromise their health goals to fit a system."

Glover's model puts each individual firmly in the centre of their personal health system. "The fact that all Canadians have access to a universal health safety net that guarantees a basic level of care for all is one of our greatest accomplishments and must be protected. The problem is to create a system that supports all people in their endeavour to become all they are capable of, rather than forcing people to accept a politically determined level of well being."

Although many health stakeholders (providers, business and politicians) claim to be patient-centered, no group has ever put together the pieces of the puzzle to make this happen. Glover's informed and empowered people-centered model addresses all the issues. It is not based on political goals (public opinion polls), business profits, a socialistic or capitalistic dream or a particular political party's platform. It is based on three universal truths, an informed age definition of health and six principles that people live by to achieve their health goals.

Glover states, "No country has ever implemented a patient centered model for health support, but Canada is perfectly positioned to be a leader. The challenge for all Canadians is to think outside the box and put health before their political, professional or business goals."

Glover will be publishing his book, *Journey to Wellness*, in September 2004. He can be reached by email at: r.glover@trytel.com.



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Vaughan Glover, DDS

Dr. Glover is a dentist in private practice in Arnprior, Ontario. Vaughan has been a life-long student of all aspects of healthcare, with a particular interest in the communication and humanistic skills necessary in relationship based healthcare. For the past 20 years Dr. Glover has been developing a proposal for a Health System that is People Centered based on his years as a student and his own experiences in practice.

Since 1995 he has been lobbying for political reform in the Canadian Health system.

In October 2003 he won an international competition in the USA to "Design an American Health System" and this he admits "has opened many doors".

He is currently finishing his book, *Journey to Wellness*, which will be released in September 2004.

Vaughan's mission statement is: "To be an advocate for the people as a visionary and architect of an informed and empowered people-centered health system that supports the health of the people."