

H A N D S

in Healthcare



Canadian Patient Safety Institute
Institut canadien pour la sécurité des patients

*Good communication is good for your **health.***

Making a real difference in patient outcomes.

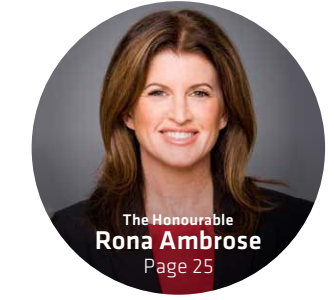
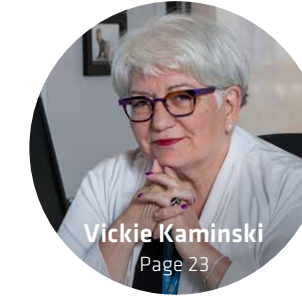
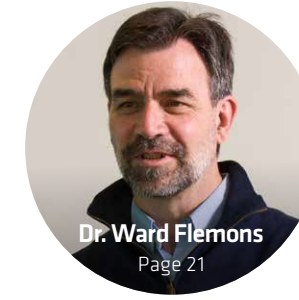
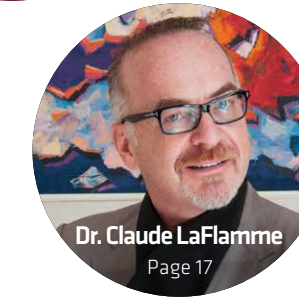
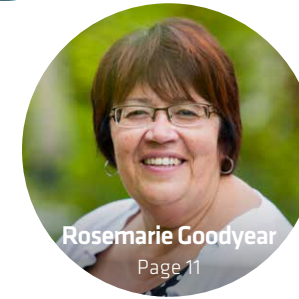
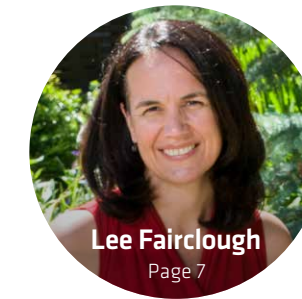
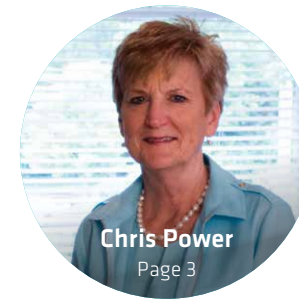
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We had a hand in that.

It often takes courage to ask difficult questions. Yet, it is an essential component of effective communication.



Chris Power

CEO

Canadian Patient Safety Institute

Pictured here with her grandsons

I have always wanted to make a difference. Coming from a family of 10 children, we were raised to give back and to leave this world in a better place. I try to be courageous in everything that I do, believing in honesty and transparency. Whether I am at home being a wife, mother and grandmother or working as the CEO of the Canadian Patient Safety Institute, I always strive for open and timely communication.

Communication is the theme this year for *Hands in Healthcare* and Canadian Patient Safety Week. It is something that resonates in both our personal and professional lives. It can have a lasting impact when it is done correctly but it can also have a lasting negative impact if done ineffectively.

I started out in healthcare with a long term goal of becoming a doctor. However, in nursing I found a profession that kept me constantly connected to patients and their families and I knew that this is where I could have the greatest impact. Many years later, it continues to serve me well. I strive to apply the lens of a nurse, a family member and a patient in my daily approach at the Canadian Patient Safety Institute. I always ask – how will this make a difference?

With my personal philosophy of always looking ahead, embracing change with an eagerness to learn more, seek more and be more, I feel we have an incredible opportunity in patient safety to leave the world in a better place. Nobody can argue against the importance of patient safety.

Patients want to receive safe care and providers want the same. It can be incredibly challenging navigating the complexities of the healthcare system. That is why we are focusing on the single aspect of communication this year. We're going back to the basics. As a provider - don't assume; as a patient - don't assume. Speak up. Ask questions. Remember, good communication is good for your health.

It often takes courage to ask difficult questions. Yet it is an essential component of effective communication. I see courage in action daily from my grandchildren, who ask marvellous, uninhibited questions. Let's take the courageous approach to communication to help keep ourselves and our patients safe.

In my experience dealing with difficult situations, I know first hand that the most valued basic principle is timely, accurate communication. No surprises. Always be open, transparent and compassionate.

Together we can be passionate about making a difference, working to make healthcare the safest it can be through good communication.

Dr. Jason Frank

Director of Specialty Education
Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons

Emergency Physician
The Ottawa Hospital



Canada is lucky to have a thoughtful healer like Dr. Jason Frank, someone who knows that being a good doctor requires far more than biomedical expertise. Not only is he an emergency physician at the Ottawa Hospital by night, by day he is improving training as a researcher, educator and director of Specialty Education at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. He is also responsible for developing CanMEDS 2015, a medical education framework that emphasizes the essential varied competencies of a physician that will be used in 58 countries around the world.

How does one man wear so many hats and remain relevant? Dr. Frank says he always reminds himself to “write yourself clear.”

Dr. Frank notes the need for improved communication in handovers or care transitions where one medical team hands off the care of a patient to another, either through shift work or change of venue. “Communication during handovers has a lot of variability and it is a risky time for information to be missed or reframed,” says Dr. Frank.

He has seen breakdowns in the healthcare

system in terms of the patient experience and patient outcomes. Patients should expect their healthcare professionals to greet them, identify themselves by name and what role they play in the patient’s care, and to be courteous, knowledgeable and respectful at all times. Patients should expect their healthcare professionals to ask them very open-ended questions when seeking information; to confirm what they have heard and summarize the conversation to ensure an understanding of what will happen next and answer any questions that the patient may have.

“Communication between health professionals and their patients and communication amongst health professionals is just one aspect of a 21st century professional in effectively and safely caring for their patients,” says Dr. Frank. “The healthcare graduates of today are more sophisticated in terms of understanding team dynamics and functioning as a team, dealing with conflict, valuing different perspectives, respecting diversity and getting the best of everyone’s expertise -- but always with the patient at the centre of their decision-making.”

Communication during handovers has a lot of variability and it is a risky time for information to be missed or reframed.

It is the playful moments spent outdoors with her young sons Oliver and Justin that help Lee Fairclough to renew and return to work refreshed and energized. Staying grounded in the basics of life reminds Lee to be a good listener and look for opportunities to promote clear and caring communication.

Even as a small child, Lee knew that she wanted to work in healthcare. Her career path has evolved at both provincial and national levels, to her current role as Vice President of Quality Improvement for Health Quality Ontario.

In engaging with patients in quality improvement, Lee reinforces the importance of ensuring opportunity for patients to engage as equals in group discussions. "Every time we engage patients in our work, we need to stop the jargon and use the opportunity to help get to the core of what we're trying to improve together. People interpret things quite differently and we should be mindful of the context that they are coming from and their experience as well."

As a leader and member of teams, Lee has learned that it is critical to provide opportunities for others to communicate with her, and with each other. Team members have different styles of communication and she values the diversity of approaches throughout the agency.

Lee says it is important to understand the nature of your team, their communication style and needs, and how to set boundaries when you are communicating. "I feel it is important to be consistent with your tone and expectation," says Lee. "Some people feel they need to respond immediately to every message and you need to help manage that as best as you can. For example, when team members are on vacation, we all try to protect that time and not to disturb them. Because of the nature of our work, we need to be clear with ourselves when something is truly urgent and when it is not."

Every time we engage patients in our work, we need to stop the jargon.



Lee Fairclough

Vice President, Quality Improvement
Health Quality Ontario

Pictured here with her husband and sons

The most effective communication provides an opportunity to talk; listen; and ask questions for clarification.



Sharon Nettleton

Co-Chair
Patients for Patient Safety Canada

Horseback riding in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains with her surgeon husband has taught Sharon Nettleton the virtues of peace and quiet and how to improve both her listening skills and ability to communicate effectively.

Promoting the patient's voice has become a passion for the co-chair of Patients for Patient Safety Canada (PPSC), following a professional career immersed in healthcare.

As a volunteer for PPSC for the past nine years, Sharon has worked tirelessly to help engage patients and families as partners in health system safety improvements. She believes patients and families need to ask lots of questions; to take the time to pause and think and to reflect to ensure they are on the same page as their healthcare providers.

"Where we are unsure, we should pursue and continue the communication, and seek clarification," says Sharon. "This is so important. The most effective communication provides an opportunity to talk; listen; and ask questions for clarification. But clearly we need time to reflect and

think about our health situation and all of the implications from our perspective."

"Everyone seems to want to jump the gun and speak in healthcare. Listening and taking the time to think things through are valuable lessons that I have learned. It is so difficult to do and I'm not always a good listener. You need to have the quiet time and be in the present, in the space and place with the people you are working with to make communication effective."

Partnering with national organizations, Sharon is helping to take what she has learned, and collaborate with others to introduce new concepts and put new ideas into practice at a grassroots level.



Rosemarie Goodyear likens her leadership style to planting a seed and nurturing a garden. As president and Chief Executive Officer of Central Health, one of four regional health authorities in Newfoundland and Labrador, she often draws from her roots as a community nurse and her foundational learning and experience in strengths-based approaches to community capacity building.

When something needs to be done, it is her job to help other people see that is the case, to facilitate an environment where innovative solutions can be created, to help people and ideas grow, and then step back and take as little credit as possible.

Rosemarie puts great stock in speaking person-to-person. She tries to be as open, transparent and comprehensive as she can in her remarks, whether it is with policymakers, staff or patients. Keeping the person at the centre of the conversation is key; as is being forthright, honest, and sincere; and answering questions as fully as she can.

When it comes to improving patient safety, Central Health is not overly blessed with additional funding or people to do the work. Successes have come from leveraging every opportunity that has come their way, finding the right people who are passionate in terms of the work and then supporting them to get it done. Rosemarie's efforts in carving out those dedicated resources and freeing up the time for those passionate people has helped to move the patient safety agenda along at a much faster pace.

"Planting seeds that are positive and exposing people to what is possible for us as an organization will take us to a place where there are better outcomes for patients, clients and residents, and a better place for our staff to work," says Rosemarie. "If you are able to nurture an innovative idea others will take it, build on it, populate it, give it momentum and then look at how they can sustain it in the organization. When I see that happening, it gives me a great deal of satisfaction and reaffirms my belief that great things are possible at Central Health."

If you are able to nurture an innovative idea others will take it, build on it, populate it, give it momentum and then look at how they can sustain it.



Rosemarie Goodyear

President and CEO
Central Health



Good communication is good for your health.

Just like companionship is essential to good health, open communication with your healthcare providers is critical to receiving safe care.



Good communication is good for your health.

Just like veggies are essential to good health, open communication with your healthcare providers is critical to receiving safe care.

To change the culture you need to encourage people to report adverse events when they occur.



Tom Blackwell

Health Reporter
National Post

Whether planning his next big globetrotting adventure or researching a new medical breakthrough, travel-enthusiast and National Post reporter Tom Blackwell applies the same critical lens to all his investigations. As a journalist who has helped shape the landscape of healthcare across Canada, Tom particularly values transparency in his pursuit of compelling stories with a human angle.

Over the past 10 years of covering the national health beat for his Toronto newspaper, Tom has seen patient safety become more of a priority but thinks improvement is still needed in the reporting of adverse events. He believes casting a brighter light on the basic numbers while also giving greater focus to individual accounts of what went wrong will help make the healthcare system more accountable.

“We have conscientious, well-trained professionals in the Canadian healthcare system, yet we still have a long way to go when it comes to reporting and disclosing adverse events,” says Tom. “It goes back to the culture in healthcare institutions that discourages reporting.”

“First of all, you get the reluctance to report at the ground level, and then there is the reluctance to disseminate that information as you go wider and higher up the chain. To change the culture, you need to encourage people to report adverse events when they occur.”

Tom likens adverse events in the healthcare system to critical incidents in the aviation industry. Where whenever there is a significant safety problem it is communicated throughout the industry and changes are made, sometimes overnight, to address the problem. “I would like to see the healthcare system being open about a problem and then trying to learn from it,” says Tom.

Dr. Claude LaFlamme has an intimate sense of why every patient should be treated like a member of the family. When hospitalized himself for a kidney transplant, Dr. LaFlamme found that his care needs were not always fulfilled and that experience helped him to see the real value of communication from the patient's perspective. That became even more the case when he learned his sister would be his living donor. It was constantly on his mind that she too was a patient and he wanted to ensure that her treatment and safety were beyond reproach.

Over his 30-year career as a specialist anesthesiologist, Dr. LaFlamme has learned that every patient is different and that a trust has to be established between healthcare providers and the people in their care. "To build that trust, listen to your patients," says Dr. LaFlamme. "Once that trust is established, only then does the patient become an essential component of the healthcare team. If we engage patients in a meaningful manner, we can help to make the system safer."

Dr. LaFlamme says that communication must flow both ways. He tries to find what speaks to people in certain situations and then asks them to reflect on next steps to nurture a healthy, sharing approach to the continuum of care.

For the past 10 years, Dr. LaFlamme has worked tirelessly on preventative measures to reduce the risk of surgical site infection (SSI), both at Toronto's Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre and as the SSI intervention lead for *Safer Healthcare Now!* – a national program to improve the safety of patient care across Canada. He also leads the patient safety committee for the Canadian Anesthesiologists' Society.

"Patient safety is a beginning, but there is not an end," says Dr. LaFlamme. "Our patients rely on us and that means they have to trust us. We need to deliver care to the highest standard. That always pushes me to do more."



If we engage patients in a meaningful manner, we can help to make the system safer.

Dr. Claude LaFlamme

Anesthesiologist
Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

Surgical Site Infection Intervention Lead
Safer Healthcare Now!

Pictured here with his mother, sister, and daughter

One lesson I have learned in communicating is to always listen to the patient.



Virginia Flintoft

Project Manager
University of Toronto

Central Measurement Team
Safer Healthcare Now!

Pictured here with her nursing friends

The bonds and friendships she formed with the women she met 45 years ago while working as a nurse in cardiac intensive care drives Virginia Flintoft's enthusiasm for patient safety, particularly in advancing care for the patient and supporting frontline staff. Virginia became a nurse because she wanted to help people; her interest in and commitment to improving patient care guided the evolution of her career.

It was her experience as a patient reporting a medical error and professional background as a nurse epidemiologist that spurred the Cancer Quality Council of Ontario to invite Virginia to be one of its patient representatives. "One lesson I have learned in communicating is to always listen to the patient," says Virginia. "We all work as a team and the patient is part of that team in caregiving."

As a project manager with the *Safer Healthcare Now!* Central Measurement Team at the University of Toronto, Virginia supports healthcare teams to deliver the best care that they can by helping them learn how to measure and monitor their performance, analyze what they are doing, and to change behaviours.

Working with *Safer Healthcare Now!*, Virginia leads Patient Safety Metrics, a web-based data submission and reporting system designed to support healthcare workers in the collection and analysis of improvement data. Patient Safety Metrics is the platform used to develop national audits focused on medication reconciliation and hand hygiene and the prevention of venous thromboembolism and falls.

"Frontline staff are incredibly busy in their day-to-day activities," says Virginia. "Patient Safety Metrics makes it easy for teams to monitor their performance so that they can improve and deliver better care to their patients, clients and residents. We are here, we are accessible, we want to help, and we can!"

Dr. Ward Flemons

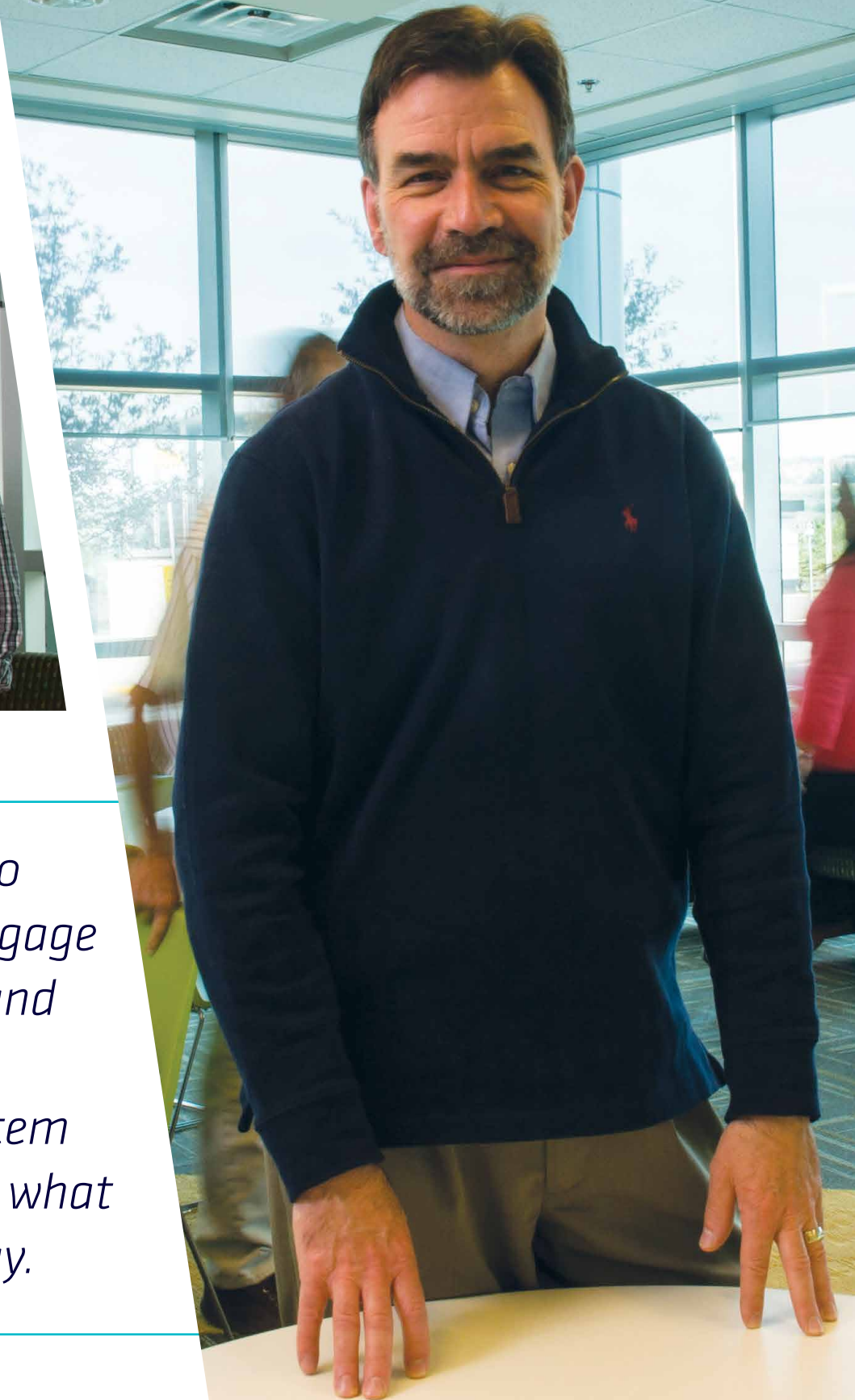
Medical Advisor

Health Quality Council of Alberta

Pictured here with the families and patients he works with

Professor of Medicine

University of Calgary



Dr. Ward Flemons has never lost sight of the power of the patient and the importance of being a good empathetic listener.

He seems to be drawn to those who have gone through tragedy and is constantly humbled by their ability to rise above their loss and work to make the system safer and more accountable for others.

His personal philosophy about communication and patient safety is to first get rid of titles. Although he appreciates why people want to address him as doctor, he prefers to be called Ward. He believes when teams are all on a first-name basis and at the same level they can more effectively communicate with one another.

“The patients that I have listened to without trying to out-think them, or guess that I know more than they do, have taught me the most about the way patients see the system and the challenges they face,” says Ward.

“Often as healthcare professionals we don’t get it because we don’t see what the patient sees. We know the system pretty well and how to navigate it, while 98 per cent of people don’t have that benefit. You can learn so much if you engage with patients and citizens in the healthcare system and really hear what they have to say, rather than

just politely listening.”

By his own admission Ward likes to shake things up in his work, particularly with healthcare administrators, along with his fellow clinicians, researchers, educators and patients. He takes advantage of every opportunity to work with the Health Quality Council of Alberta and other national organizations to reshape ideas and concepts to get people to think about patient safety in dramatic new ways.

You can learn so much if you engage with patients and citizens in the healthcare system and really hear what they have to say.

Whatever we are doing we should ask ourselves: How does this make it better for patients and their families?



Vickie Kaminski

President and CEO
Alberta Health Services

The head of Alberta Health Services (AHS) is someone who truly values effective communication, even when that comes in the form of an apology.

Vickie Kaminski, a senior executive with more than 35 years of experience in the Canadian healthcare system, took the reins of an often embattled AHS in 2014. She has been working hard to see that the staff there and the people of Alberta are receiving the right information at the appropriate time in an open and transparent manner.

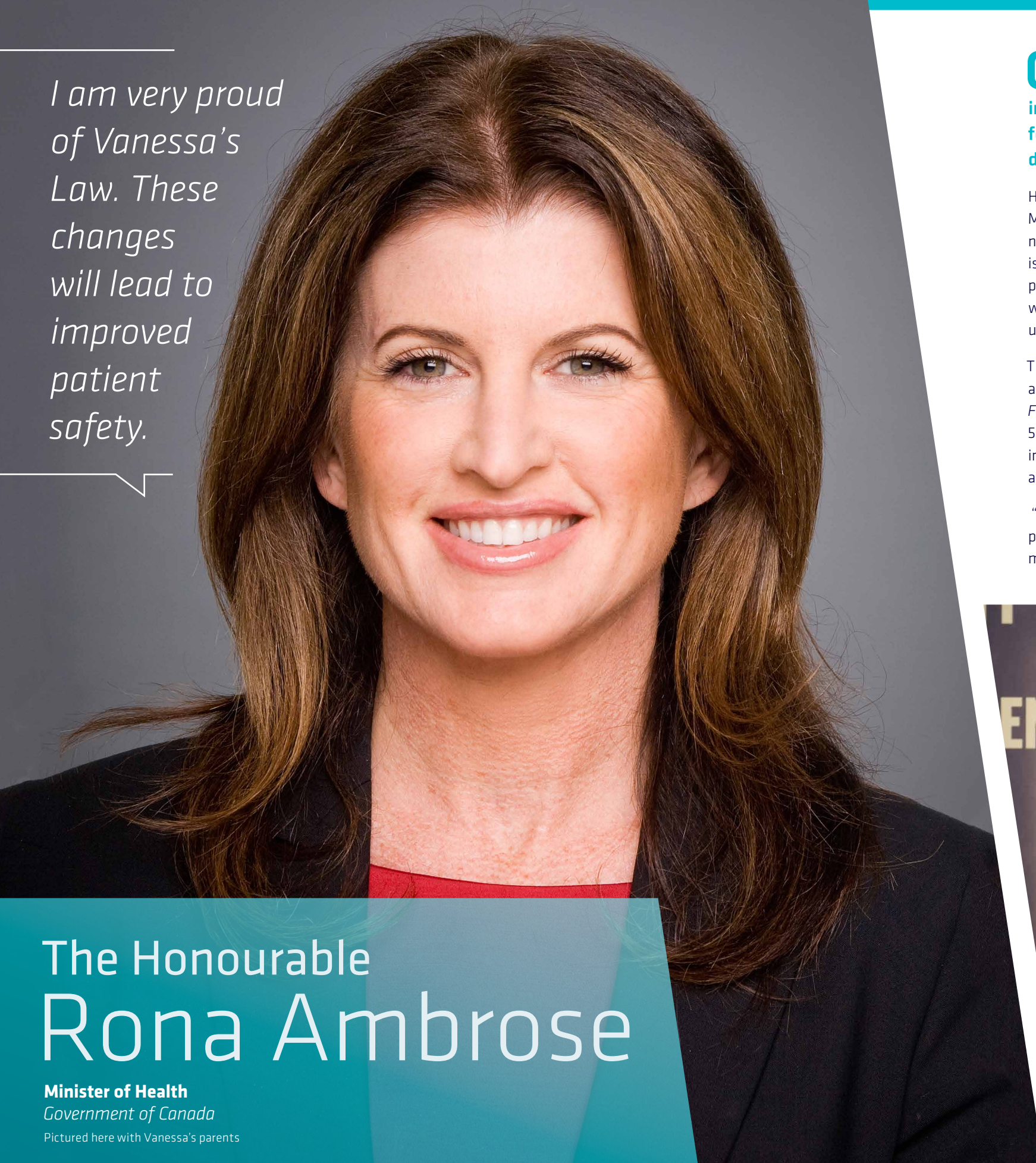
Her golden rules of communication are to tell the truth, never shy away from saying you are sorry and always tell the affected parties how you are going to fix things. "We have to be sincere, we have to be fast, and when we need to apologize, apologize and don't prevaricate," she says.

Vickie prefers in-person communication and believes that there is no communication that is insignificant. No matter how large or small the topic, people want information and knowledge. Vickie urges "no surprises" from her team at AHS and also asks her colleagues to err on the side of providing more information, rather than less. "I like to hear about the small things too, as it helps me to keep my finger on the pulse," says Vickie.

Patient and family-centred care is the basic premise under which AHS operates. "Whatever we are doing we should ask ourselves: How does this make it better for patients and their families? And if we can't answer that, we really have to stop and think about why we want to keep doing it," she says. "Every person, every day, whatever they are doing, should be able to answer that question."

Vickie graduated as a registered nurse some 40 years ago and likes to keep her ties to nursing. She sits on numerous boards and committees and also participates in surveys with Accreditation Canada, an activity that lets her step back into the provider world and stay current with what is happening on the frontline.

I am very proud of Vanessa's Law. These changes will lead to improved patient safety.



The Honourable Rona Ambrose

Minister of Health
Government of Canada

Pictured here with Vanessa's parents

One of Rona Ambrose's lasting legacies will be the impact of a federal law that compels drug companies to recall unsafe products and to revise labels to clearly reflect health risk information in plain language. Prescription drugs, taken as prescribed, are estimated to be the fourth leading cause of death in North America, with about 20,000 deaths and 200,000 serious drug injuries annually in Canada alone.

Health Minister Ambrose, together with her colleague MP Terence Young, worked vehemently to ensure that no drug that is unsafe is left on store shelves. The law is named after Young's teenage daughter, Vanessa, who passed away some 15 years ago from a heart attack while on a prescription drug that was later deemed unsafe and removed from the market.

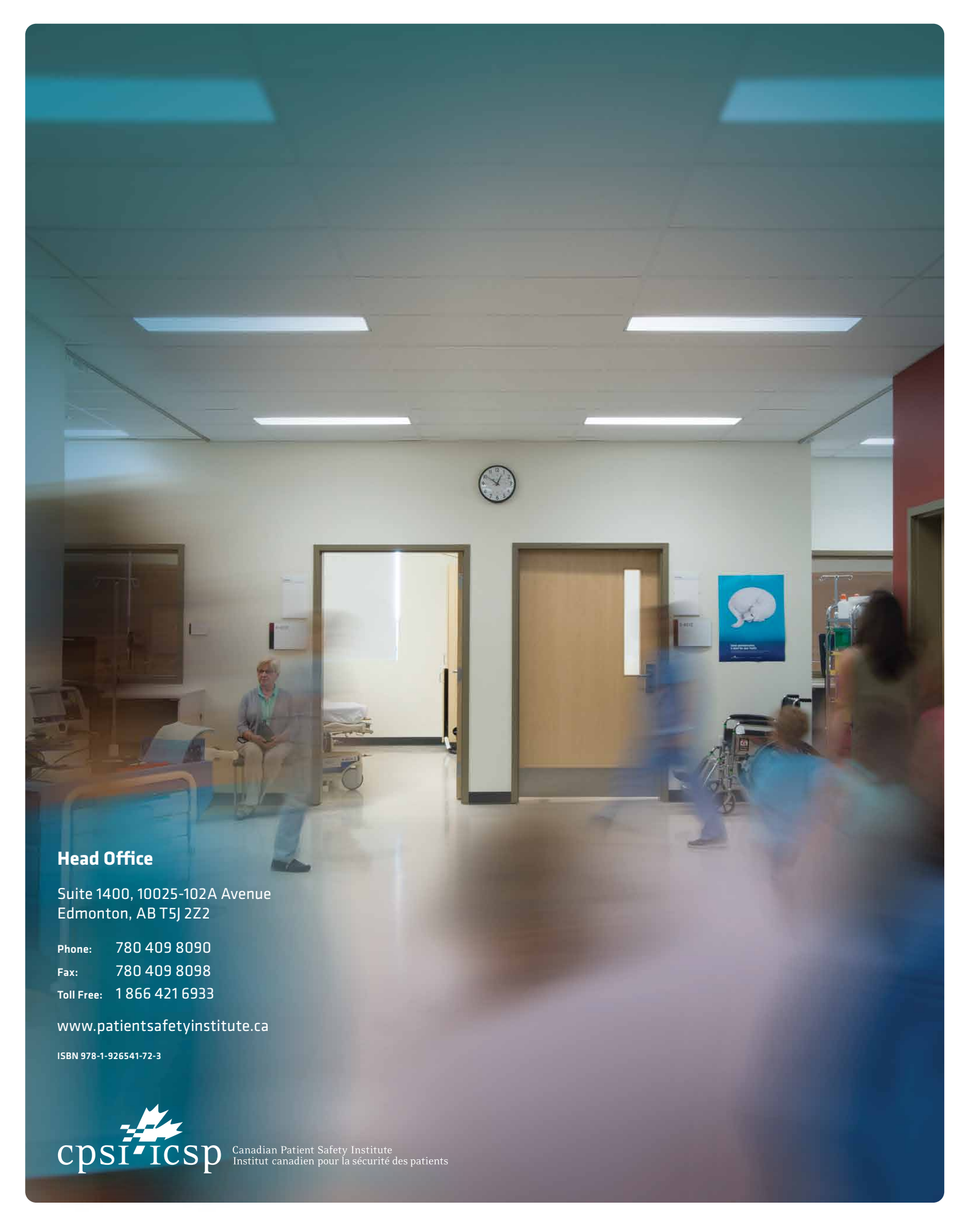
The *Protecting Canadians from Unsafe Drugs Act*, known as Vanessa's Law, provides for profound changes to the *Food and Drugs Act*, which had not been updated in over 50 years. Supporting regulations will also require health institutions to report all serious adverse drug reactions and medical device incidents.

"Vanessa's Law truly changes the face of the pharmaceutical industry and the healthcare system to make it more transparent, accountable and responsible,

not only for the claims it makes and the labels it uses, but also for the effects it has on all Canadians," says Minister Ambrose. "I am very proud of Vanessa's Law. These changes will lead to improved patient safety and better health outcomes, particularly for vulnerable populations such as children, seniors and pregnant or nursing women. I am confident that Canadians will be better protected and lives will be saved as a result of these changes."

Rona Ambrose believes that communication is key and we all have a role to play when it comes to patient safety. "More than ever before, people want to have an active role in their healthcare decisions," she says. "It is important to provide credible and timely information to help them make well-informed choices concerning their health and that of their families."





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