

PATIENT SAFETY AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT EDUCATION FOR PARAMEDICS: THE ROLE OF THE IHI OPEN SCHOOL CHAPTER

Samantha Robb¹, Trevor Hines Duncliffe BA(Hons.) MA¹, Lisa Henderson¹, Dugg Steary MA(c)¹, Alan M. Batt MSc PhD(c)^{1,3,4}
1. Paramedic Programs, Fanshawe College, Ontario, Canada. | 2. Oxford County Paramedic Services, Ontario, Canada. |
3. Paramedic Science Discipline, CQUniversity, Queensland, Australia. | 4. Department of Community Emergency Health and
Paramedic Practice, Monash University, Victoria, Australia.

INTRODUCTION

In 2017, an IHI Open School Chapter was founded at Fanshawe College. This was undertaken as an additional measure to promote patient safety and quality improvement awareness among students and faculty. This chapter launch coincided with the embedding of several IHI Open School online courses into a subject within the paramedic program. This curriculum integration initiative has been previously described in this publication.⁽¹⁾

The purpose of an IHI Open School Chapter (herein, a 'Chapter') is to bring together healthcare professionals with a shared interest in learning about patient safety, quality improvement, and improving care for patients and their families. Chapters are generally multi-disciplinary groups, established amongst groups of students or professionals, and can be formed within educational institutions or healthcare delivery organisations.

A Chapter allows students, faculty and professionals to interact and help each other gain skills to improve care. Chapters also afford opportunities to interact with peers, connect with faculty, and accomplish scholarly activities, such as publication and presentation of patient safety and quality improvement research. A Chapter may also provide opportunities to train allied healthcare staff, and can even involve patients in the patient safety education process.

Within educational institutions, faculty

members ideally provide an advisory role to the chapter and its leadership, thus encouraging its growth and development. The role of the Chapter leader(s) is an ideal opportunity to encourage healthcare students to gain leadership experience, and to take a formal role in advocating for patient safety initiatives in their institution. The leadership structure of the Chapter can take the form of a board, multi-campus model, or a dual leadership model. Further details of leadership models are outlined in the IHI Open School Chapter Leader Toolkit.

Faculty members act as advisors to the chapter (AB, DS and THD), ensuring continuity of activities and guidance on appropriate topics that are relevant, linked with learning objectives, and identified as priorities in the literature or through quality assurance processes. The Fanshawe Chapter is currently led by one of the authors, a second year paramedic student (SR). It is expected that the Chapter leader will rotate annually to an incoming second year student in the college.

THE EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVE

AB previously led an IHI Open School Chapter in an ambulance service in the Middle East, and while there led several safety and quality initiatives in areas such as pain management, obstetrical care and airway management. Feedback from paramedics and management

was positive, and the service noticed improvements in care delivery through targeted clinical audits.

The IHI Open School Chapter model allows for early engagement with students, and provides them with a forum to discuss and promote patient safety and quality improvement in healthcare. In combination with the Open School online courses which we have integrated into curriculum, the Chapter is an ideal forum in which to undertake patient safety discussions, collaborative exercises and IHI Open School courses.

THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

As previously stated by Crosetta et al. (2018), the issues of patient safety, quality improvement, and advocacy do not receive as much attention in the paramedic curriculum as they should. Their previously described inclusion of the IHI online course material into the curriculum was well received by fellow students. Building on the interest of fellow students we founded Fanshawe College's IHI Open School Chapter. The main goal of our Chapter is to provide another avenue for students and faculty to discuss patient safety and be able to collaborate on improving patient safety with students in all years of their studies within the paramedic program and other healthcare related programs. Starting a Chapter is not without its challenges, mainly linked to promotion and recruitment.

Using the lunch and learn style of meetings we were able to include students in both years of study in the paramedic program whose attendance allowed for great discussion drawing on experiences and learning gained during placements, within the classroom and from other life occurrences. We invited speakers to commence the lunch and learn meetings by leading a topical discussion focused on the theme of patient safety. This allowed those in attendance to gain valuable insight and provided focus for discussion afterwards.

For 2018, the introduction of the IHI Open School Chapter will occur at the beginning of the school year to the first year paramedic students, allowing them to begin thinking about ways to improve the quality and safety of their patient care. This time of the year is normally quieter from an academic workload perspective which may allow for more students to be available to attend and get involved. As the students begin their placements with paramedic services and hospitals, the Chapter will allow them to notice issues in the health care system that could put patients at harm and help them think of ways to change their perspective on situations. Not only do these discussions allow paramedic educators to engage the paramedic students in quality and safety, they also allow for interdisciplinary communication and understanding of healthcare as a whole. The Chapter is a fun, interactive, and intriguing way to talk about and improve patient safety and quality of care. Chapters can incorporate games, videos, food and open conversations to ensure the involvement of all parties who attend and to increase the interest in talking about the subject and sharing experiences. In our future professions we will be working side by side with other healthcare professionals such as nurses, respiratory therapists, personal support workers, and others who could offer different suggestions to promote quality and safety of care for our patients. As we begin to expand and include other health care programs at Fanshawe College, it will allow us to compare our experiences and offer other way on how to improve the way we attend for patients and their families.

The IHI Open School courses are a great introduction to patient safety and quality improvement in healthcare, but in our estimation, bringing aspects of the online training modules into the in-person setting would significantly impact the understanding of the material. The IHI Open School courses are largely focused on in-hospital or clinic settings. The Chapter can provide a venue for discussion and the input of paramedic faculty while completing the training. We propose that this would help to highlight the significance of quality improvement and patient (and provider) safety in paramedicine. 

ADVICE FOR EDUCATORS

Consider establishing an IHI Open School Chapter. Having an organised group of students and faculty, interested and passionate about patient safety and quality science, can provide other faculty and students with additional support, and a forum for discussion and debate of safety and quality issues.

At the time of writing, the Primary Care Paramedic Program at Fanshawe College is one of the only paramedic education programs in the world to have integrated the IHI Open School Courses and Chapter into curriculum. (2) It is our hope that by sharing our experiences with these innovative solutions to patient safety and quality improvement that other institutions will follow suit.

Some suggested IHI Chapter activities are outlined below.

- Review IHI Open School online courses, or discuss case studies focused on prehospital patient safety issues.
- Create paramedic and prehospital specific case studies pertaining to patient safety and quality improvement issues – then share these for all to use!
- Invite guest speakers to share their knowledge, such as faculty, other healthcare professionals, patients, organisations, and safety/quality improvement personnel.
- Join local patient safety and public health awareness campaigns.
- Organise patient safety clinical learning events such as simulation scenarios.
- Undertake patient education activities.
- For further information on establishing an IHI Open School Chapter, visit <http://www.ihl.org/education/IHIOpenSchool/Chapters/Pages/default.aspx>

RESOURCES

- IHI Open School Course Catalog: <http://bit.ly/2AEDWBh>
- IHI Open School Course Summaries: <http://bit.ly/2mcHKW1>
- IHI Open School Faculty Guide: <http://bit.ly/2ADNU5T>
- List of Academic Institutions utilising the IHI Open School courses: <http://bit.ly/2EkwcGS>

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any employer or organisation.

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AUTHORS



Samantha Robb is a second-year student paramedic, and the IHI Open School Fanshawe College Chapter leader in Fanshawe College, London, ON, Canada. Email: s_robbs5@fanshaweonline.ca Twitter: @srobbs8



Trevor Hines Duncliffe is a faculty member in the Primary Care Paramedic Program in Fanshawe College, London, ON, Canada. Email: t_hinesduncliffe@fanshaweonline.ca



Lisa Henderson is a Primary Care Paramedic in London, Ontario. Twitter: @lishendy2

Dugg Steary is faculty in the Paramedic Programs at Fanshawe College. Email: dsteary@fanshawec.ca Twitter: @duggsteary



Alan M. Batt is faculty in the Paramedic Programs at Fanshawe College. Email: abatt@fanshawec.ca Twitter: @alan_batt