



Patient and Family Partner Program Year in Review 2023-2024

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Letter from the Vice President, Clinical Programs, Quality, Equity, and Medical Affairs

Thank you! Listening to you has made a difference!

As I reflect on the past year at both Unity Health and in the health care system more broadly, I am reminded of how important it is that we remember to keep the patient, resident and family experience at the centre of all that we do.

When we see that the experiences and health outcomes of our patients vary so widely, it reminds us that we need to listen to all voices, and keep working toward building a health care system that works for everyone.

We are so fortunate at Unity Health to be able to collaborate with such a dedicated group of Patient and Family Partners. Our Patient and Family Partners bring a wealth of diverse perspectives, personal experiences and insights that help us improve the quality of the care we provide. They are a guiding force in shaping our policies and practices. Their presence on various committees, working groups and advisory councils continues to advance our work in providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

Looking to the year ahead, we have exciting work planned that will continue transforming how we improve the care experience. We will remain steadfast in our efforts to provide equitable care for our patients. We will continue to evolve how

we measure, understand and improve the care experience. And perhaps most importantly in 2024-25, we will be launching a new electronic patient record which will transform experiences for many of our patients and all of our staff and physicians. While these are only a few highlights of our priorities for this year, each one is shaped by our partnerships with our Patient and Family Partners.

This Patient and Family Partner Year in Review celebrates some of the many milestones we have achieved together. It is a tribute to the collective wisdom, empathy and strength that our Patient and Family Partners bring to Unity Health. We are grateful for their contributions, and we look forward to our continued journey of co-creating the best care experiences at Unity Health.

Congratulations on another outstanding year together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Irfan Dhalla'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Irfan Dhalla
Vice President, Clinical Programs, Quality, Equity, and
Medical Affairs



Patient and Family Partner Program

At Unity Health, our mission is to create the best care experiences — together. Patient and Family Partners (PFPs) work alongside hospital staff and leadership to enhance the quality and safety of healthcare delivery, striving to improve the overall experience for patients and their families.

PFPs represent diverse perspectives from the communities we serve, contributing to organizational goals and initiatives related to quality and safety priorities, policies, procedures, communication plans, and educational resources. Drawing upon their personal experiences as patients, family members, or caregivers, PFPs play a crucial role in advancing a culture of patient and family-partnered care at Unity Health.

Below are examples of how the PFP program has grown over the past year; creating new opportunities to further integrate PFPs in all we do.



61

Total # of PFPs



13

New PFPs welcomed



313

Collective number of years of PFP dedication at Unity Health



17

Number of Patient Family Council (PFC) members



275

Total number of hours Unity PFC members dedicated to council meetings over the last year



100

Percentage of staff “extremely likely” to recommend presenting to the PFC to their colleagues

Focus on New PFP Activities

We are committed to embedding PFPs in all we do at Unity Health Toronto. This includes the identification and creation of new opportunities each year. The graphic below demonstrates the diversity of net new activities and partnerships our PFPs were engaged in over the past year.



- New Working Groups
- New Councils and Committees
- New Research/Funding Proposals
- Focus Groups
- Storytelling/Education for Staff and Learners
- Interview panels
- Surveys
- Materials Review
- Redesign/Wayfinding
- Program Planning Retreats

Spotlight on Engagement

It has been a busy year for the PFP Program. Here are a few highlights of the over 66 events and initiatives they partnered on this year.



Exploring Excellence

November 2023

1 PFP Alla Tshipis joined an interprofessional panel to bring her lived experience to teach learners and staff about the Bariatric Centre of Excellence at the 68th annual Clinical Day.

Ask us Anything!

May 2023 and still going

2 PFPs Suehlan Yu and Bari Zittell – with input from the Patient and Family Councils – partnered with staff to co-design a patient-facing digital campaign to encourage patients and families to ask questions of their healthcare providers. This campaign was featured on screens across all Unity Health sites.

Celebration Time

April 2023

3 Over Patient Experience Week, PFPs, leadership, and staff attended an in-person recognition event to celebrate PFP contributions and honour their years of dedication.



Designing Care

November 2023

4 PFP Don Ross brought his lived experience as a patient and eye for design to support staff in selecting finishes for the upcoming Reactivation Care Centre Unit at St. Joseph's.

Empowering Teams

June 2023

5 A team from the St. Michael's Medical Surgical Intensive Care Unit became the first graduates of the Team Training & Clinical Excellence Academy (TTrACE). PFPs Bari Zittell, Michael Nickerson, and Lauren McDougall shared their insights and lived experiences to co-create this two-day in-person team-based educational program.

And the Award goes to...

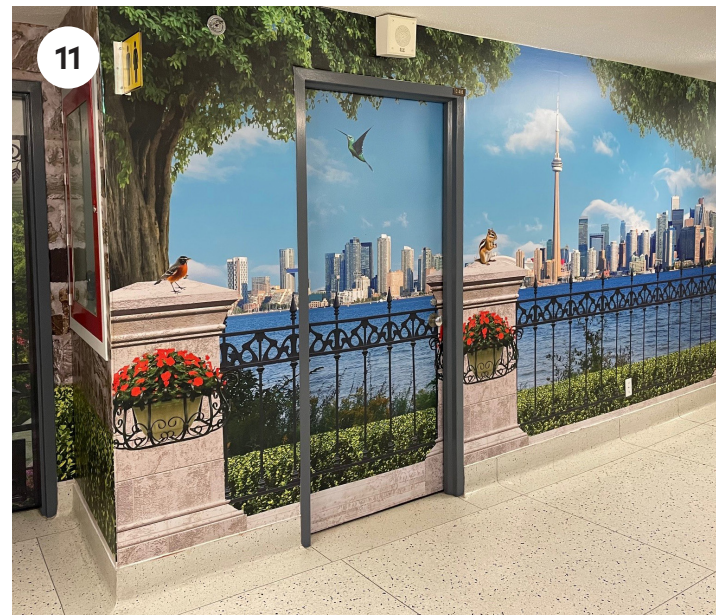
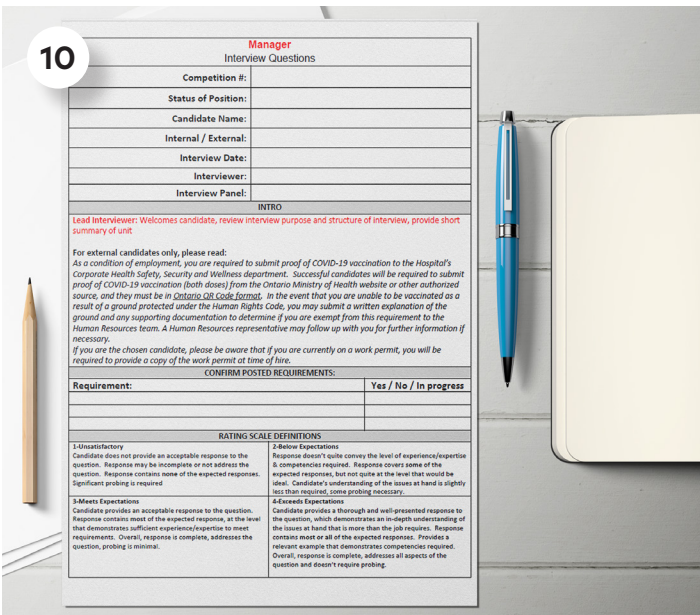
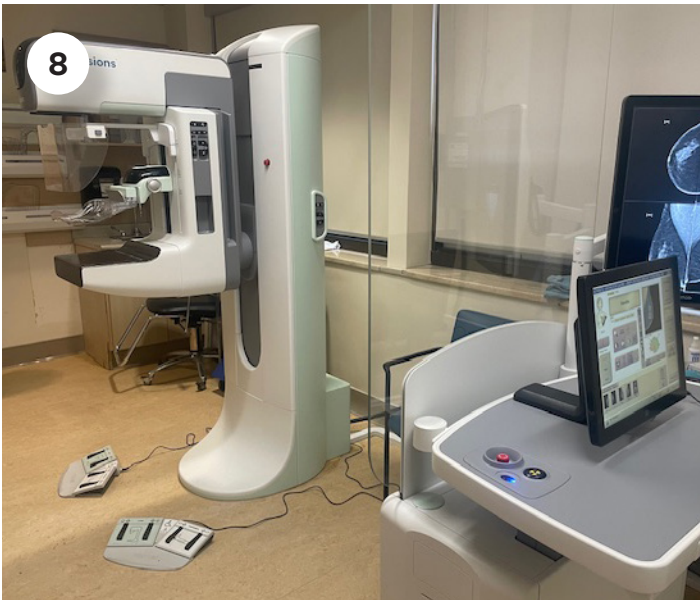
September 2023

6 PFP Janet Rodriguez was awarded the St. Michael's Our Shared Values Inclusivity Award which recognizes an individual or team that fosters an inclusive, welcoming environment where everyone is treated equitably and without judgment.

Lights, Camera, Action!

December 2023

7 PFP Lynn Bailey recorded her story that will contribute to the Online Health Library for staff and learners to gain knowledge from the lived experiences of our PFPs.



Funding Victory

December 2023

8 PFPs Judi Richter-Jacobs and Jennifer Schultz partnered with the Medical Imaging and Breast Centre Team by participating on the Breast Management Committee where they successfully advocated for funding to purchase two new Hologic Mammography Units with 3D imaging.

Sustainable Success

June 2023

9 Unity Health received the 2023 Energy and Environmental Stewardship Award for their sustainability work, which is supported by PFPs who advise on all sustainability initiatives presented to the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee.

You're Hired

Ongoing initiative

10 PFPs participated as members of 14 leadership-level hiring panels to ensure new staff at Unity Health live our values and dedication to patient and family-partnered care.

Designing for Wellness

Multiple Initiatives

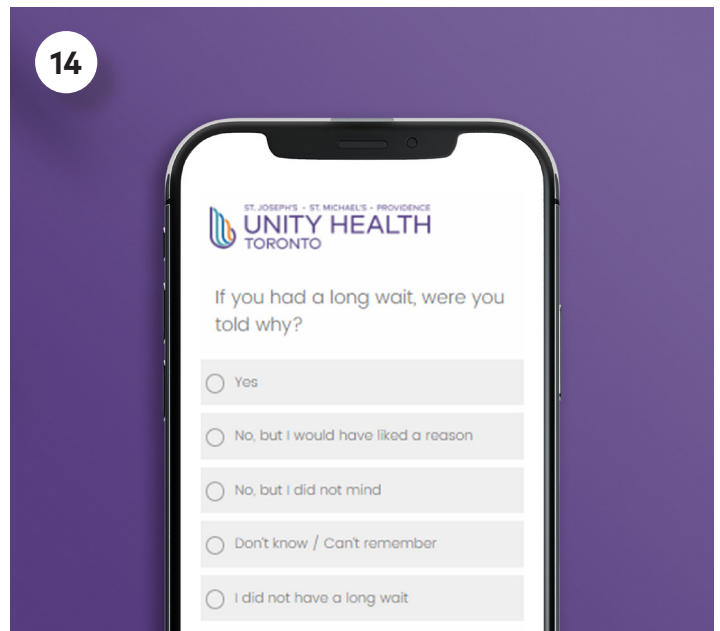
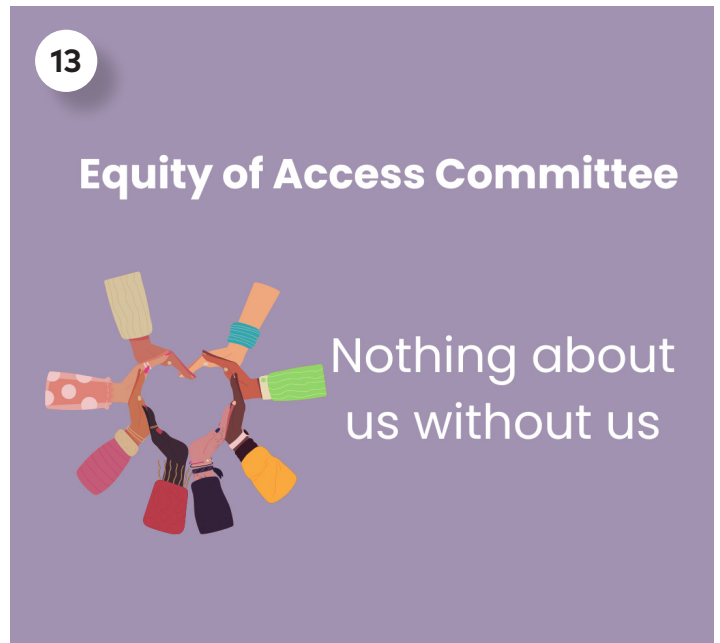
11 PFPs partnered on several wayfinding and redesign projects including the St. Joseph's ICU Waiting Room, the St. Michael's Emergency Department, and Providence's A4/B4 hallway mural.



Empathy in Action

November 2023

12 PFPs and hospital staff developed a compassionate care education initiative for patients receiving involuntary mental health admissions in the Emergency Department, known as the Compassionate 1 project.



Driving Equity

Ongoing

13 PFPs became active members and important leaders in the Equity of Access Committee. Their individual and collective wisdom continually focuses the work on the experiences of people with disabilities and to think more critically about accessibility beyond AODA compliance. Their voice, advocacy and experience are critical to moving Unity towards being more accessible as a workplace and in patient care.

Survey Says

Ongoing

14 PFPs partnered with our Patient Experience Team to develop the tools and processes for Unity Health's Care Experience Measurement Framework and helped construct survey questions that focus on aspects of care that matter most to our patients and families.

Here's what Unity Health Staff had to say about partnering with our PFPs

“

We were thrilled to have a PFP as part of our Panel for Clinical Day! She brought the patient perspective to the multidisciplinary discussion, which was really appreciated by our attendees. We look forward to collaborating with her again, and with other PFPs, in our education events. She was super prepared, asked amazing questions, and was so great to work with.

– Johanna Skippon, Clinical and Integrated Education Project Coordinator

“

Working with a PFP while creating a resource to support those who experience a death at Unity Health was a great experience! The PFP was invaluable to the working group process, bringing a perspective outside of the healthcare team that really helped bring our work into focus. She integrated herself into the working group and was able to advocate for patients and their families/friends across several disciplines. Because of her contributions, the resource is more accessible and useful, aiding patient families, friends, and caregivers across Unity Health. I'm so grateful to have worked with this PFP!

– Hogan Brock, Spiritual Care Practitioner

“

As the Collaborative Learning Specialist at Unity Health Toronto, I have had the privilege to work with Patient Family Partners in a few different capacities, including committee work and interprofessional education curriculum planning and delivery. PFPs bring a different perspective to the table which enriches the discussions and ultimately the end product. As engaged members of the team, they bring both their health and life experiences which have a large impact on the learners' experience with the activity.

– Robyn Davies, Collaborative Learning Specialist

“

Our PFPs have been instrumental in bringing the patient voice to our Trauma Neurosurgery Quality and Performance Council. They have brought their expertise and patient and family voice to discussions ranging from tracking patient belongings, improving care for patients that Leave Against Medical Advice and using AI to predict adverse events. Our PFPs routinely ask incredibly insightful questions that put the patient and family at the centre of our quality improvement initiatives.

– Amanda McFarlan, Manager Trauma, Neurosurgery & Critical Care

“

I have had the privilege to work with a number of PFPs in developing our processes and tools for Unity Health's Care Experience Measurement Framework. The perspectives our PFPs brought to the working groups have helped to create surveys which focus on the aspects of care which matter most to our patients and families. We look forward to further collaboration with our PFPs in the future as we continue expanding Care Experience measurement across Unity Health!

– Patrick Soo, Project Manager, Patient Experience

“

We are very grateful to the PFPs who serve on the Our Shared Values Awards Selection Committee at each of our three sites. You always enrich the conversation bringing both the patient voice as well as your own wider lived experience (such as professional insights). Your input deepens the discernment in selecting the award recipients. You have also made concrete suggestions about the process that has led to improvements. Whenever I am on a Unity Health committee with PFPs you are a gift. It would not be possible to strive for our shared vision of 'The best care experiences. Created together.' without your invaluable input.

– Vanessa Nicholas-Schmidt, Mission and Values Manager 08



Spotlight on the Unity Health Patient Family Council

About The Council:

Established in 2022, The Unity Health Patient Family Council (PFC) consists of passionate Patient and Family Partners who bring unique and diverse lived experiences as patients and caregivers to support Unity Health's vision of best care experiences created together.

Hailing from three legacy site-specific PFCs (Providence, St. Joseph's and St. Michael's), members bring their rich experiences from each organization and work collaboratively to offer perspectives and insights that improve patient-centred care at Unity Health.

How They Make a Difference:

The PFC offers a forum for the organization to seek and learn from the patient and family perspective. Promoting a culture of patient-and family-centred care within Unity Health, the PFC, together with staff and leadership co-create strategies to improve and enhance the delivery of high-quality, accessible and safe care.



The Council effects change by:

- Providing input on corporate strategic planning and annual priority-setting
- Reviewing care experience data and providing input on the overall organizational strategy to measure and improve the care experience
- Providing input on how to create a robust Patient and Family Partner engagement strategy in support of the new Unity Health electronic patient record (EPR)
- Co-creating Patient and Family Partner Program process improvements such as recruitment cycle and strategies, and a Code of Behaviour
- Advising on Anti-Racism, Equity and Social Accountability staff education and training initiatives
- Informing initiatives that improve and celebrate the care experience, such as the Emergency Department wait time display and the Unity Health Annual Report
- Supporting the conclusion of the Site PFCs and continued growth of the PFC
- Informing or co-creating patient-facing policies and guidelines such as the Unity Health Visitor Policy and the new Privacy Guidelines related to recording patients and staff in hospital
- Identifying improvement opportunities in the Patient Relations complaint review process

What's Next:

Building on the momentum of its work to date, the PFC is committed to providing meaningful input that supports Unity Health's patient engagement with a focus on the following:

- Continuing to promote the PFC within Unity Health and the larger community
- Expanding Council membership to incorporate fresh voices and ideas, ensuring we represent the broader Unity Health patient and caregiver experience
- Enhance collaboration and grow partnerships with staff and leadership to continue to effect change across the organization
- Establish our Council as leaders in generating ideas to improve the patient experience and supporting their implementation across the organization



To learn more, contact the Patient Experience Team at patientexperience@unityhealth.to



Patient and family partners on our new electronic patient record

The Epic Way Patients are leading the way in helping Unity Health launch its new electronic patient record (EPR)

“I wanted to be part of what I knew would be an incredibly exciting and impactful program aimed at bringing tangible positive change to the experiences of our patients, clinicians and staff at Unity Health. This is a true end-to-end transformation in health care driven by technology, and I cannot wait for Project Connect to go live!” Patient and Family Partner (PFP), Project Connect

Unity Health made a network-wide commitment to implement a clinical and digital transformation with Epic, a new electronic patient record (EPR), to create a healthcare journey for our patients that is rooted in compassion and connectivity so we can deliver the best care experiences created together. We recognized how invaluable it is to have patients and family partners work alongside our physicians and staff to provide their diverse perspectives and personal experiences during the planning and design of Epic. Over the past year, twenty-four PFPs across the project, including the EPR executive committee, three councils and 18 workgroups, contributed their expertise to help make the nearly 10,000 decisions over four project phases that will make the new EPR a reality.

“Working with PFPs on the Equity in Care workgroup has been extremely eye-opening and helpful in understanding the patient experience of marginalized communities.” Manager, Project Connect

MyChart, powered by Epic, is the new secure online patient portal that will go live on November 30, 2024. PFPs have contributed significantly to the decisions being made on the design of MyChart, powered by Epic. The Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) includes six PFPs alongside Unity Health leaders, physicians, staff and Epic staff, making decisions around this new portal’s functionality, including:

- Allowing patients to view their medication, test results, and upcoming appointments all in one place, even if they are seeing multiple healthcare providers across Unity Health Toronto.
- Enabling the scheduling of some appointments with healthcare teams at a patient’s convenience and the ability to complete pre-visit tasks from home.
- As a parent, caregiver, or guardian you can stay on top of a loved one’s appointments through an approved proxy status, which allows you to access their health information.

By being a part of this digital transformation for Unity Health, patients are making an invaluable contribution to bringing Unity Health into a new era of innovation that will better connect our patients and care teams with Epic.

Meet the Patient Experience & Engagement Team



LISA ZELTZER
Patient Experience &
Engagement Specialist



ANTONIA MORGANTI
Patient Experience &
Engagement Specialist



EMERALDA BURKE
Patient Experience &
Engagement Specialist



SALLY-ANN JOHNSON
Manager,
Patient Experience



CATHY O'NEILL
Senior Director,
Care Experience, Patient
Partnerships and Safety



IRFAN DHALLA
Vice President,
Clinical Programs, Quality,
Equity, and Medical Affairs



We are grateful to all of our dedicated Unity Health Patient and Family Partners for their contributions this past year.



Want to learn more or apply to become a Patient and Family Partner at Unity Health?

Scan the QR code or email patientexperience@unityhealth.to