



Pharmacist on the Front Lines of a Pandemic - Q&A with Dan Burton & Stephanie Gysel

Dan Burton, Co-founder, Healthcare Evolution, Calgary and fellow colleague, Stephanie Gysel, pharmacist.

My colleague and I, Stephanie Gysel, had a unique opportunity to support a number of specialists in the Calgary area when the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown first took place.

Many of the Endocrinologists in the Calgary area refer their patients that have diabetes and/or obesity to community-based educators to provide ongoing follow-up and care and the majority of these educators are community-based pharmacists. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, many pharmacies were not equipped or able to offer consultations as they did not have adequate support to provide services in a virtual manner.

My colleague and I were aware that these patients still required ongoing care, therefore we transitioned nearly all of our consultations to phone or virtual platforms. This ensured patients were still receiving valuable education and striving towards their health goals. We worked in a collaborative manner with specialists and our patient's family physician to ensure adequate follow-up and monitoring was occurring.

Patients were immediately excited to work with us as they were able to stay safe in the comfort of their home. We also delivered any new medications, or refills, directly to their home through a contactless delivery courier.

It was very rewarding to be able to innovate and ensure patients with chronic diseases were still able to receive the care they deserve. I feel that we were able to provide almost a higher level of care virtually as it was very convenient for the patients and they seemed motivated for more frequent follow-ups.

Our main challenges surrounded patients who were not as tech-savvy and struggled with their webcams or accessing links to virtual consults in their emails. We developed tools to provide to patients that complimented our phone or virtual consultations to ensure step-by-step instructions were followed by patients, such as with injection training.

We have had so much success in regard to our virtual consultations that we have continued to provide them to patients as our primary mode of patient care, with the exception of patients who require physical assessments or would prefer to meet in person under appropriate safety



protocols. This has allowed us to continue supporting our physician colleagues and to continue to provide ongoing convenience and more regular follow-ups with patients throughout Calgary and surrounding area.