

For Immediate Release

August 28, 2023

First Day of School for Inaugural Class of the Queen's-Lakeridge Health MD Family Medicine Program

DURHAM REGION –Lakeridge Health welcomed the inaugural class of 20 medical school students for their first day of orientation as part of the new, first-of-its kind in Canada Queen's-Lakeridge Health MD Family Medicine Program.

"We're very excited to welcome the inaugural cohort of medical school students to this novel program based at Lakeridge Health," said Dr. Nadia Ismiil, Deputy Chief of Staff, Chief, Academic Affairs and Research, and Interim Chief and Medical Director, Laboratory Medicine.

"We know that when people have access to primary care, communities thrive and succeed. The shortage of family doctors in Ontario and Canada is critical and requires a bold and new collaborative approach. We believe that this program holds tremendous promise to increase access to primary care in Durham Region."

"We are delighted to introduce this innovative model of medical education as one of the potential solutions to the family doctor shortage," said Dr. Jane Philpott, Dean, Queen's Health Sciences. "It will train and graduate practice-ready, community-focused physicians able to work as part of interdisciplinary teams."

According to recent data from the Ontario College of Family Physicians, it is estimated that approximately [2.2 million Ontario adults](#) have neither a family doctor nor a primary care nurse practitioner. In Durham Region, close to 44,000 people are without a primary care doctor – a number that has grown by 11,000 in just two years. The groundbreaking Queen's-Lakeridge Health MD Family Medicine Program aims to address the critical shortage of family doctors in Durham Region and beyond.

"Today's orientation event is a tremendous milestone for Lakeridge Health and our Queen's University partners," said Dr. Joel Kennedy, Chief and Medical Director, Family and Community Medicine, Lakeridge Health. "Both organizations recognized a need and when we received the provincial government's support for the new medical school seats, our collective efforts focused on creating a curriculum focused on the comprehensive skills and knowledge that primary care doctors need."

Through the integration of classroom and workplace learning, students will begin to build relationships with the community from the start and will engage in urban centres and small communities across the Region. Within six years, the program will graduate well-trained, comprehensive family physicians ready to make an immediate impact.

"The patient-doctor relationship is at the core of family medicine," said Dr. Kennedy. "Family doctors support us at our most vulnerable moments and nurture and guide our health journeys. The student experience in our program will foster the longer-term patient and community relationships that are central to family medicine."

This innovative program has already attracted the attention of others across the province, country and even globally. The Queen's-Lakeridge Health team acknowledges the trailblazing nature of this work and recognizes that the program has become a blueprint for a new way to educate future doctors and health-care professionals.

Collaboration is crucial to the new approach to education. The new program significantly expands on the Queen's [Department of Family Medicine teaching site](#) established in 2012 at Lakeridge Health's Oshawa Hospital.

"This program builds on the longstanding partnership between Queen's and Lakeridge Health," said Dr. Allan Grill, Assistant Dean, Queen's-Lakeridge Health Campus. "We look forward to our faculty and students playing a greater role at the Oshawa Hospital and local community-based family practice offices while making an impact across the region as they prepare for careers in family medicine."

"Our collective goal is to graduate more family doctors in Ontario, and we want to provide a customized experience to prepare these future physicians for where they're needed the most: in our communities," said Dr. Ismiil. "Through this program, we're creating an innovative approach to education that supports healthier populations. No doubt, graduates of this program will play a crucial role in the health of the Durham Region population for years to come. We're focused on inspiring our students and we hope to inspire others to join in the journey."

To learn more about the Queen's-Lakeridge Health MD Family Medicine Program, visit <https://meds.queensu.ca/academics/queens-lakeridge-health-md-family-medicine-program>

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About Lakeridge Health

With five hospitals, four emergency departments, three critical care units, a long-term care home, a full range of medical and surgical specialties, more than 20 community health-care locations and a state-of-the-art surgical centre within the soon-to-open Jerry Coughlan Health & Wellness Centre, Lakeridge Health offers some of the broadest and most comprehensive acute care, ambulatory care, and long-term care services in Ontario.

Lakeridge Health is also home to several regional specialty centres and services, including the Central East Regional Cancer Program, R.S. McLaughlin Durham Regional Cancer Centre, The Shoulder Centre, and eye care and chronic kidney disease services. Additionally, we are proud to serve our community with a full suite of inpatient, ambulatory, and community-based mental health and addictions services, and provide safe, high-quality, compassionate care in our state-of-the-art long-term care home, Lakeridge Gardens.

Guided by our vision of *One System. Best Health.* and supported by a dedicated team of more than 8,700 staff, physicians, and volunteers, Lakeridge Health is a proud member of the Durham Ontario Health Team (Durham OHT) and works in collaboration with the Durham OHT, as well as primary care, and community and government partners to foster a truly integrated, regional system of care. Together, we are focused on empowering people to live their best health and fostering an accessible, inclusive, and equitable environment for all.

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About Queen's University

Queen's University has a long history of scholarship, discovery, and innovation that has shaped our collective knowledge and helped address some of the world's most pressing concerns. Home to more than 25,000 students, the university offers a comprehensive research-intensive environment with prominent strengths in physics, cancer research, geoengineering, data analytics, surveillance studies, art conservation, and mental health research. Welcoming and supporting students from all countries and backgrounds to a vibrant, safe, and supportive community is an important part of the Queen's experience. Diverse perspectives and a wealth of experience enrich our campus and our community. A core part of our mission is to engage our students, staff, and faculty in international learning and research, both at home and abroad.

Queen's University has ranked in the top 10 globally in the 2021 and 2022 Times Higher Education Impact Rankings. The rankings measured over 1,500 post-secondary institutions on their work to advance the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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