

Leadership key to success of Health and Safety Management System pilot at West Park Healthcare Centre

By Caroline Dickie

Since becoming President and CEO of West Park Healthcare Centre in 2005, Anne-Marie Malek has been the catalyst for health, safety and wellness improvements at the Toronto rehabilitation, complex continuing and long-term care facility. An indication of the facility's progress was a renewal of its three-year accreditation - with no conditions - from Accreditation Canada earlier this year.

Around the same time, West Park accepted an invitation from the Ontario Safety Association for Community & Healthcare (OSACH) to join a Health and Safety Management System (HSMS) Pilot Program. West Park, in partnership with OSACH and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, joins four acute care and one long-term care organization in the project. "The pilot will move us further along the continuum toward a culture of health and safety," says Malek. "It came at a great time for us, while we're still able to build on the momentum created by the accreditation award."

The OSACH HSMS is based on the CSA Z1000 standard and provides a management structure to successfully integrate the silos of staff, patient/client and public health and safety. This holistic and coordinated approach, new to healthcare, empowers organizations with tools, processes and an implementation strategy to identify, evaluate, mitigate and manage all risk. The desired outcome is a coordinated, comprehensive and sustainable risk management solution within a shared culture of conscious inquiry.

The new emphasis on safety reflects a willingness to improve and change from previous habits. Prior to Malek's appointment as President, West Park was paying a surcharge on its compensation premiums due to rising accident rates. Yet there was no framework in place to guide improvement. Malek hopes the new HSMS will serve this need, helping West Park to prioritize safety in the long term. "The key benefit to a management system approach is that it creates a disciplined road map for assessing and monitoring risks, and for identifying opportuni-

ties to improve," she explains. "Essentially what we're getting is a three-year plan."

Malek was attracted to the OSACH system because she saw many of West Park's core values - such as "achieving excellence" and "investing in people" - reflected in its goals and processes. On a practical level, she needed something comprehensive enough to address all areas of her diverse facility. "What impressed me most about the OSACH system is the thoroughness of the self-assessment process," she



Anne Marie Malek is the President and CEO of West Park Healthcare Centre.

says. "It was very gratifying to systematically and thoroughly review various aspects of health and safety in our workplace."

Now in the latter stages of the pilot, Malek is preparing to tackle areas flagged for improvement. No small task, she admits. "The biggest challenge ahead," she says, "will be our capacity as an organization to communicate and implement change, to make the changes stick. We foresee a continuous process of implementation, monitoring, and evaluation."

Malek doesn't expect another award for her efforts. She doesn't want accolades. What she wants is the reassurance of knowing everything has been done to honour the right of her employees to a healthy work environment. "Ultimately it all comes back to the people," she says. "We take our accountability for ensuring safety in the workplace very seriously."

Caroline Dickie is the sole proprietor of a Toronto-based freelance writing company called Red Print.

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