

## Health care changes coming

### Aging boomers will no doubt demand patient-centred care

[Tom Carney](#) / North Shore News

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It's not easy to be your own advocate but it is something we all should learn to do.

Everyone wants to be treated with dignity and respect and if we've been treated unfairly we have the right to have our concerns addressed in a timely and appropriate way.

The experience that seniors have with the health care system is the No. 1 complaint received at our office. Lately, more seniors are choosing to share their stories in the media.

Margo Bentley, a senior at a care facility operated by Fraser Health, is caught in a legal limbo between life and death, force fed in defiance of her living will. The matter is now before the courts and is widely viewed as a test case in the right to die movement.

At the Delta Hospital the fallout continues over the decision by hospital staff to discharge Vivian Fitzpatrick, a legally blind elderly woman, from the ER in the middle of the night. The case made national headlines. Dr. Nigel Murray, CEO of Fraser Health, said appropriate clinical decisions were made in the Fitzpatrick case but he recognized that the care experience was not a positive experience for the client. Exactly! Good clinical care and good patient care are not the same thing. Some would argue that the experiences of Bentley and Fitzpatrick and scores of others is proof that the medical system is broken. I wouldn't go that far. But it does seem to me that while science and technology are thriving in medicine, humanity and empathy have not fared as well.

The experiences of Bentley and Fitzpatrick are not isolated cases and they help to explain the growing movement towards patient-centered care. Patient-centered care replaces physician-centered care with one that revolves around the patient, putting their needs first. It's not a magic bullet but one can't help but think that if those attending to Bentley and Fitzpatrick had asked themselves is this the best thing for the patient, I'd be looking for another topic for this column.

The idea of patient centered care isn't new - it's been around for decades - but it has failed to gain traction in the medical community. I think the boomer generation, those born between 1946 and 1964, will change that.

According to the 2011 census, there are approximately 9.6 million baby boomers in Canada (three Canadians out of 10). They are wealthier, healthier and more active than any generation of elderly people in history and they are used to getting what they want.

Boomers are retiring at the rate of approximately 1,000 per day in Canada and as they age they will soon be arriving at the front doors of hospitals across this country. They won't be satisfied with good clinical outcomes alone.

Those running the health care system will need to make the boomers' experiences with health care the standard metric for measuring performance for their organizations.

Make no mistake, if they don't, the boomers will do it for them.

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