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MedTech conference brings together innovators and users

BY DOUG DITTMER, MD
AND SHIRLEY FENTON, MA

WATERLOO, ONT. – Last November, at the Waterloo MedTech conference, clinicians, industry, academia and start-ups converged in the heart of Canada's Toronto-Waterloo tech corridor. This second annual symposium, supported by local government, incubators, accelerators and industry, had over 150 participants from across Ontario who gathered to look at the barriers that innovation faces in healthcare.

The conference opened with keynote speaker, Hon. Kathryn McGarry, a provincial cabinet minister and a former nurse representing Cambridge, with the challenges she faced as a nurse and how medtech could have been a solution to problems she encountered. Kevin Tuer spoke about Canada's Open Data Exchange and growth in data capabilities.

Dr. Alexander Wong, a Canada Research Chair in Medical Imaging Systems at the University of Waterloo, spoke about deep learning and the artificial intelligence (AI) revolution. Because AI can remember orders of magnitude more cases than clinicians, he noted we should not fear AI, but embrace it, to augment clinical intelligence and improve the healthcare system.

Breanne Halyk, from JLABS Canada, talked about the entrepreneurial spirit in a 129-year-old company. She explained how small companies can gain the benefits of partnering with a big company.

Simon Cheeseman, from Baycrest Health Services, talked about their proto-

> After the success of the 2017 event, plans are now under way for a 2018 Waterloo MedTech conference.

type to procurement model, and their journey through the innovation ecosystem. They have invested over $38 million in 67 projects, leading to the development of 84 new products, processes or services.

Fiona Fitzgerald, from GE Healthcare, discussed the barriers to innovation in a large company. These include understanding change, customer focus, organizational structure and connection to the ecosystem.

Dr. Matthew Bromwich, from the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, asserted that you need vision, skills, resources, incentives, and an action plan to be successful, otherwise you will run into false starts, frustration, resistance, anxiety and confusion.

Dan Sinai, from IBM, discussed IBM Watson Health in the continuum of care and the body as a source of big data. Sarina Cheng from Sunnybrook Health Sciences spoke about their 10-year journey with "MyChart" and the barriers and resistance faced with placing such a novel idea into a large hospital.

The keynote was Bill Charnetski, Ontario's chief health innovation strategist, who spoke about value-based innovation. His office is focused on accelerating the adoption and diffusion of new health technologies into Ontario's health system. The hope is to provide better care, closer to home, by using virtual, mobile and digital health technologies.

Dr. Doug Dittmer and Shirley Fenton, MA were the Co-Chairs, Waterloo Region MedTech Conference 2017.