

Doctor's office sign testament of town's health care crisis: Maley

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

At least one sign of an ongoing health care crisis has arrived in Milton and it reads 'one complaint per visit.'

The sign hangs both inside and outside the door of long-time family physician Dr. Walter Koslowski's office.

Dr. Koslowski recently returned from vacation, but was unable to return calls from The Champion on the matter.

But the sign outside his Main Street practice is just one of the times, said Halton Medical Society president Dr. Garnet Maley.

"In increasing numbers, there are people coming to the doctor with a shopping list," he said. "In some situations, it's appropriate to have only one or two complaints per visit."

And the policy can be broken. "I don't think this is an absolute inviolate rule," he said. "I think it's a guideline."

A one complaint policy puts the onus on patients to narrow their focus and concentrate on the most important issues, said Dr. Maley.

"When you say one complaint, it's not a crushing headache, a pain in my chest and a hangnail," said Dr. Maley.

But capping complaints has become an issue due to numbers that don't add up.

Take Milton's doctor-patient ratio, for example.

Currently, there are 15 family doctors in town, serving a population of 33,000.

That boils down to more than 2,000 patients per physician, well above the provincial average of 1,314, said Dr. Maley.

As a result, doctors are scrambling to keep up with the demand.

On average, family physicians set aside between seven and eight minutes for a patient visit.

But the timing gets out of whack when a patient arrives with a laundry lists of ailments, said Dr. Maley.

"It's just not fair to the other people in the waiting room," he said. "You have to use your time effectively."

So far, Dr. Maley has no plans to put a limit on his patients and is aware of only one local physician who does.

And the Region's medical officer of health, Dr. Bob Nosal, is also unaware of

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Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

An ongoing health care crisis is behind this sign, found hanging at the office of long-time Milton physician Dr. Walter Koslowski, some medical experts say.

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Heather Penman is a thirty year resident of Milton and is actively involved in many fundraising events for the Milton District Hospital Foundation. She is the present chair of the MDH Foundation and devotes her energies to supporting Blazing Saddles, Hike for Health and Strawberry Fair. Heather is also involved with the Cancer, Heart & Stroke, and United Way Campaigns. She gives generously of her time for the betterment of the community.

Paul Scherer

Paul Scherer has been a major contributor as a coach, organizer and fundraiser for many sporting events and leagues over the years. More recently he has been the chair of the following community committees: Milton Santa Clause Parade, Canada Day Celebrations and the Milton Millennium Committee. Paul is also the President of the Ratepayers Association and is a Board Member of the Knights of Columbus. He is a tireless volunteer for the Milton community.

Kim & Craig Thomas

Kim & Craig Thomas are the organizers for the Terry Fox Run held every September. They and their 45 volunteers have successfully raised more than \$100,000 for Cancer Research over the past 5 years. They worked with the Cancer Research Foundation to bring Betty Fox to Milton in 1999. Their daughter Jenn was Terry's teammate in 1992. They make run day a fun experience and full of camaraderie.

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