Queen's-Lakeridge Health MD Family Medicine Program Welcomes Fourth Cohort Program

(Oshawa) August 25, 2026 - Four years of medical learners are now studying in Durham Region as Lakeridge Health welcomes the newest cohort of the Queen's-Lakeridge Health MD Family Medicine Program.

Twenty incoming students are taking part in orientation this week, beginning a medical education experience rooted in family medicine, early clinical exposure and the communities they may one day serve.

The fourth cohort's arrival marks a defining moment for the first-in-Canada program. For the first time since its 2023 launch, learners are represented across every year of the four-year undergraduate program, while the inaugural class begins its final year and looks ahead to anticipated graduation in May 2027 and moving on to postgraduate medical training.

"In just three years, this program has grown from an ambitious new model into a vibrant academic community spanning the full medical education journey," said Dr. Nadia Ismiil, Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief of Research, Education and LHEARN at Lakeridge Health. "Our focus on family medicine reflects our commitment to improving access to primary care so that people can benefit from prevention, earlier detection and earlier intervention. At the same time, we are building an academic environment that supports the growth of specialty and tertiary care in Durham Region. Together, these efforts will help more people get the right care, closer to home."

Created through a partnership between Queen's University and Lakeridge Health, the MD Family Medicine Program places family medicine and primary care at the centre of medical education. Students combine classroom learning with early and ongoing experiences in hospitals, family medicine practices and community settings across Durham Region.

That community-based approach gives learners a first-hand understanding of the region's diverse and rapidly growing population, while reinforcing the relationships, continuity of care and teamwork that are central to comprehensive family medicine. Strengthening access to primary care can also help reduce pressure on hospitals through prevention, earlier detection of disease and earlier interventions that help people stay healthier and, where possible, avoid the need for more complex acute care.

The learning environment is growing alongside the program. Lakeridge Health's community hospital-based Clinical Teaching Unit, launched in September 2025 and co-taught by family physicians and internists, provides another setting for students to complete clinical rotations and gain hands-on experience as part of interprofessional care teams.

For Lakeridge Health, the program is also helping advance its evolution as an academic health system. Leading Education & Research is a direction in the organization's 2026-2031 Strategic Plan, reflecting a commitment to strengthen academic partnerships, expand learning opportunities and bring education, research and evidence closer to patient care.

That academic mission extends beyond family medicine. Lakeridge Health is the most active training site for Queen's University specialist physician residents outside of Kingston and is an important teaching site for learners from the University of Toronto and other medical schools. These partnerships support a broader goal: tackling primary care challenges while building the specialist expertise and tertiary services needed to close gaps in care across Durham Region.

The impact extends beyond the classroom. Physicians, staff and teams across Lakeridge Health serve as teachers and mentors, while students bring curiosity, new perspectives and opportunities for continuous learning - contributing to a culture where clinicians and learners improve care together.

The milestone brings the program closer to its long-term purpose of strengthening access to comprehensive primary care while contributing to a broader academic health system that can respond to the needs of Durham Region's growing and diverse communities.

"One of the strengths of this partnership is that students begin learning in clinical environments early, alongside the people who care for patients every day," said Dr. Randy Wax, Chief of Staff at Lakeridge Health. "Our academic mission is about building the health system Durham Region needs for the future. That means training comprehensive family physicians who can strengthen primary care, while also creating opportunities to train specialists and grow specialty and tertiary care here in Durham Region. Both are essential to improving access, reducing inequities and helping more patients receive the care they need closer to home."

As the newest students begin orientation, they join three cohorts already building those connections across Durham Region - and a growing network of educators, mentors and community partners supporting the next generation of physicians and the future of care in Durham Region.