

[New Glasgow woman, entrepreneur, receives honour of excellence](#)

Company develops app to take medicine on schedule

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Patti Ryan of New Glasgow holds the Progress Women of Excellence Award she received on Wednesday night for Entrepreneur and Innovator.

Patti Ryan was part of a panel discussion on technology in health care, and she was speaking about launching a new feature on the application her company developed when a man walked onto the stage and gave her a hug.

“You can keep going for a long time on something like that,” the New Glasgow woman said.

The man was reacting to the news that Health QR was working on new features for its application, which will send notifications about when it’s time to take medication for people who have Crohn’s disease.

“It’s a real value-added service for people struggling to take medication on time,” she said.

Ryan’s company, Health QR, is a health information technology company that develops medication management solutions that improve health outcomes.

With a background working in health care, most recently as a policy analyst for the Nova Scotia Department of Health, she said being an entrepreneur is a “big adventure” with ups and downs. But she said it’s worth the struggles and challenges when she sees her work helping people like the man who has Crohn’s disease.

“It’s the hardest thing I’ve ever done in my life, but it’s certainly rewarding,” she said about becoming an entrepreneur.

On Wednesday night, Ryan was honoured with a Progress Women of Excellence Award from the Canadian Progress Club’s Halifax Cornwallis chapter.

“It’s an incredible honour,” she said about receiving the Entrepreneur and Innovator Award. “It means a lot on a lot of different levels. It’s been really humbling.”

A founding member and past president of the Progress Club in Pictou County, Ryan’s venture into business came about as a result of two factors – through her work in health care and her own health issues.

“During my personal experience with cancer, I had trouble accessing my information to be well informed about my care,” she said.

She was also inspired by the story of Dave deBronkart, who demanded his own health records after being diagnosed with stage-four kidney cancer. With the information in hand, he was able to find a clinical trial online, which helped him beat the disease. He’s now active in advocating for the opening of health care information directly to patients.

“Information is power,” said Ryan. “If you don’t have access, how can you be an informed partner in your care?”

As a cancer survivor, she knows “information allows people to be a part of those decisions... rather than a passive partner.”

Ryan left her 25-year career in the health care system to start her own business after deciding that she wanted to create solutions.

“It was a real deep-seated passion,” she said, adding that government has an important role in regulation. “But government can’t be innovative – it’s not their job, their job is to regulate.”

Through her work with the Health Department, she looked at policies in other countries and how they were developed, and studied the affordable care act in the United States in which patients used information to better their health through access to electronic medical records.

“Looking at this, I thought what a brilliant use of policy. The access to information is what really spoke to me.”

Her company launched a mobile app in 2015 that helps people manage their medications through a secure connection to participating pharmacies. Ryan explains that while the app is free, Health QR sells the software service to pharmacies.

Customers are able to see their active prescriptions, receive notifications about their prescriptions and reminders when refills are due, order refills and have access to medication information in an emergency, when travelling and when consulting with a health care provider.

While the main Health QR office is located in Halifax as part of an incubator program, with a second location in Hamilton, Ont., Ryan still lives in New Glasgow and tries to work from home one day a week when she's not travelling for her company.

Progress Women of Excellence Awards

- Hosted by the Canadian Progress Club Halifax Cornwallis
- 27th year for the event
- Annual fundraiser supports Phoenix Youth Programs
- Raised more than \$1 million since its inception
- Honours seven inspirational women who play an important role in the community
- Women at the pinnacle of their professions are recognized in the categories of Arts and Culture, Communications/Public Affairs, Education and Research, Entrepreneur/Innovator, Health Sport and Wellness, Management and the Professions, and Young Woman of Distinction