

Topic Overview

Planning for the Future Health Workforce of Ontario

Citizen panel
18 August, 10 and 17 September 2016

The McMaster Health Forum convened three citizen panels on the subject of planning for the future health workforce of Ontario. The panels were organized with the support of the Government of Ontario and the Ontario SPOR SUPPORT Unit (OSSU), which is supported by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Province of Ontario. The three panels brought together 43 citizens from across the National Capital Region, Greater Sudbury area, and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area to examine the problem, options for addressing it, and key implementation considerations. The purpose of the panels was to guide the planning for the future health needs of Ontarians and the necessary workforce to provide this care.



Discussing the problem

Panel participants identified eight challenges related to planning for the future health workforce of Ontario. The first three of these challenges related specifically to health workforce planning, while the other five focused on health system challenges more broadly. These challenges included: 1) poor management of the supply, mix and distribution of health workers in Ontario and lack of clarity about health workers' responsibilities; 2) failure to adequately support informal/family caregivers and patients as partners in care delivery; 3) little patient engagement and poor integration of patient and caregiver preferences in decision-making about who provides care, and what types of services are provided; 4) lack of accountability and transparency across all levels of the health system; 5) differential access, availability and quality of services across Ontario; 6) no financial accountability and lack of clarity around resource stewardship; 7) sluggish adoption and integration of innovative technology to improve care; and 8) inadequate consideration of the impact of past policies.

The views expressed in the panel summary are the views of panel participants and should not be taken to represent the views of our funders or the authors of the panel summary.





43 citizens from across the National Capital Region, Greater Sudbury area, and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area gather during McMaster Health Forum events on 18 August, 10 and 17 September 2016.

Discussing the options

Participants supported developing a data-driven approach for determining population health needs (element 1), but stressed that any approach should be transparent, well communicated and engage patients and citizens in the process of defining needs. In discussing element 2 (determining how to organize care and the health workforce while taking into account economic realities), there was a general consensus that team-based models of care should continue to be pursued in the province. However, some participants stated that moving in this direction would require greater clarity and communication around professional roles and responsibilities. Participants also called for greater care in allocating health system resources to the models that provide the greatest value for money. Finally, in discussing element 3 (choosing policy levers to meet health workforce planning objectives), participants echoed the call from element 1 to have a greater role in the process of planning the future health workforce in Ontario. Participants also showed support for the use of a number of policy levers, including changes in accreditation and licensing of international physicians, changes to the medical curriculum to reflect changing population health needs, and new methods of remunerating physicians particularly in rural and remote communities.

Discussing the implementation considerations

When turning to implementation considerations, participants focused on three key barriers that they felt needed to be overcome to ensure successful implementation: 1) difficulty in gaining consensus across health-system stakeholders; 2) objections from professionals who may feel their autonomy is threatened; and 3) limited financial resources to support health workforce planning.

Panel deliverables

To learn more about this topic, consult the [citizen brief](#) that was presented to participants before the panel and the [summary](#) of the panel. For an electronic copy of the citizen brief or panel summary, visit our website www.mcmasterhealthforum.com and click on 'Products' along the sidebar.



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