

Topic Overview

Enhancing Access to Patient-centred Primary Care in Ontario

Citizen panel
15 October 2016

The McMaster Health Forum convened a citizen panel on the subject of enhancing access to patient-centred primary care in Ontario. The panel was organized with the support of the Ontario SPOR SUPPORT Unit, which is supported by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Government of Ontario. The panel brought together 13 citizens (from across the region covered by Toronto and the greater Toronto area, Hamilton, Haldimand, Brant, Mississauga, Halton, and Sault Ste. Marie) to examine the problem, options for addressing it, and key implementation considerations. The purpose of the panel was to guide efforts to enhance access to patient-centred primary care in Ontario.

Discussing the problem

Panel participants identified four challenges related to enhancing access to patient-centred primary care in Ontario: 1) patients have inconsistent access to primary-care providers (e.g., primary-care practices not accepting new patients and providing care when needed); 2) primary care does not comprehensively address patients' needs (e.g., challenges accessing needed services in the home and community-care sector); 3) individuals are not always accountable for their own health (e.g., lack of responsibility for engaging in unhealthy behaviours); and 4) technology is adopted slowly, and is inconsistently implemented across primary-care settings (e.g., inconsistent use of interoperable electronic health records to share information between providers).



The views expressed in the panel summary are the views of panel participants and should not be taken to represent the views of the Ontario SPOR SUPPORT Unit, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Government of Ontario, McMaster University, or the authors of the panel summary.





Thirteen citizens from across the region covered by Toronto and the greater Toronto area, Hamilton, Haldimand, Brant, Mississauga, Halton, and Sault Ste. Marie gather during a McMaster Health Forum event on 15 October 2016.

Discussing the options

Participants were supportive of efforts that would ensure all Ontarians receive the care they need, when they need it (element 1) with a strong preference for improving the timeliness of care by having nurse practitioners act as their primary-care provider. Participants were also vocal in asking for increased coordination between their primary-care provider and any specialists they see. In deliberating about how to put the patient at the centre of care (element 2), participants emphasized the importance of education to help patients manage their own care. However, participants had mixed opinions about how to make the system accountable to meeting patient expectations (element 3), but most emphasized the need to develop measurements that reflect citizen values and preferences, and to use them as part of public reporting to enhance accountability. Several values-related themes emerged during the discussion about these elements, with three emerging with some consistency: 1) collaboration (in delivering care for patients, and through the increased sharing of information, particularly for referrals to and coordination of care with specialists); 2) education (of patients to seek care and manage their health); and 3) citizens' values and preferences (in the development of new models of care and in determining what measures should be used to evaluate primary care).

Discussing the implementation considerations

Throughout the deliberations, participants highlighted two factors as the most important for implementation: 1) moving forward with the implementation of electronic health records to support coordination across the system, and personal health records to help patients be more informed about their care and to take a more active role in it; and 2) improving the level of citizen engagement in planning and implementing patient-centred primary-care reforms.

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](http://www.mcmasterhealthforum.com) and click on 'Products' along the sidebar.



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