The McMaster Health Forum convened a citizen panel on the subject of strengthening care for frail older adults in Canada. The panel was organized with the support of McMaster University’s Labarge Optimal Aging Initiative and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (grant number 339657). The panel brought together 16 citizens from across the region covered by Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Kingston, Waterloo, Winnipeg, Montreal and Halifax to examine the problem, options for addressing it, and key implementation considerations. The purpose of the panel was to guide efforts to strengthen care for frail older adults in Canada.

Discussing the problem

Panel participants identified five challenges related to strengthening care for people with frailty in Ontario: 1) the complexity of frailty makes it challenging for all involved to understand, identify and manage; 2) frail older adults and those at-risk for frailty are not always proactively identified and linked with services they need; 3) lack of centralized information for patients and providers to support coordinated care and self-management; 4) caregivers face many challenges and have few supports available to them; and 5) lack of collective governance perpetuates fragmentation in the system.
Discussing the implementation considerations

Throughout the deliberations, participants viewed several factors as important for implementation: 1) increased collaboration between providers and across settings of care to better manage the needs of frail older adults; 2) increased consistency across communities and provinces in the services available and standards that these services should meet; and 3) enhanced accountability to ensure that any reforms are successfully implemented as designed.

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.