

Topic Overview

Strengthening Care for Frail Older Adults in Canada

Citizen panel
13 August 2016

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.

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The views expressed in the panel summary are the views of panel participants and should not be taken to represent the views of McMaster University, McMaster University's Labarge Optimal Aging Initiative, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, or the authors of the panel summary.





Sixteen citizens from across the region covered by Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Kingston, Waterloo, Winnipeg, Montreal and Halifax gather during a McMaster Health Forum event on 13 August 2016.

Discussing the options

Participants were supportive of greater access to activities that would help to prevent frailty or the onset of frailty for those who are ‘pre-frail’ (element 1) with a strong preference for increased information and media campaigns on frailty and healthy active aging. In deliberating how best to manage the burden of frailty (element 2), participants emphasized the importance of communication with providers who are equipped with the necessary skills to care for complex patients. Participants discussed at length the important role that caregivers play in supporting the care of frail older adults, and emphasized the need for caregiver-specific social and financial supports. 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) empowerment (of patients to seek care and manage their health, of caregivers with needed tools to assist managing the care of family members and friends, and of patients and caregivers in having access to needed health information); and 3) credibility (of information for patients and caregivers, of providers with the necessary training, and of resources to manage complex patients).

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.



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