The McMaster Health Forum convened a stakeholder dialogue on the subject of building momentum using the avoidable mortality indicator in Canada. With the support of the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the dialogue brought together a broad range of stakeholders from across Canada -- seven policymakers and decision-makers, three participants from government-supported agencies, two from health professional associations, and five from research and analysis groups -- to examine the problem, elements of a comprehensive approach for addressing it, and key implementation considerations.

Deliberation about the problem

A number of dialogue participants saw significant value in an indicator like avoidable mortality that can bring problems to attention (such as geographical regions or populations within Canada that contribute disproportionately to the avoidable mortality rate) and spur an examination of the sectors, systems, programs and services that contribute to such problems. And no dialogue participants argued that the indicator should not be part of a broad suite of indicators that are reported on and monitored. That said, dialogue participants identified two pairs of interrelated features of the problem that contribute to the challenge of building momentum in using the avoidable mortality indicator in Canada: 1) lack of clarity about how the indicator could best be used (particularly in terms of informing decisions) and by whom it could best be used; and 2) lack of consistent approaches to measuring avoidable mortality internationally, which complicates cross-country comparisons, and the lack of access to avoidable mortality data within the country, which precludes research and analysis groups from using the data to inform decision-making.

The views expressed in the issue brief and dialogue summary are the views of the authors and should not be taken to represent the views of the funders.
Deliberation about next steps

Many dialogue participants committed to increasing dialogue within their own constituencies about the avoidable mortality indicator and its uses, and to supporting informed decision-making about prevention and treatment programs. Dialogue participants also prioritized: 1) calling for a consensus process at the international level to harmonize the approach and terminology; 2) making available avoidable mortality data to research and analysis groups; 3) incorporating the avoidable mortality indicator in the suite of indicators that governments monitor now; 4) having the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) continue to develop standards for and prepare reports about the avoidable mortality indicator; 5) having CIHI and/or its partners prepare compelling case studies of interventions and their realized or expected impacts on the avoidable mortality rate, and support interprovincial learning about what is changing (or not) and why.

Dialogue deliverables

To learn more about this topic, consult the issue brief that was presented to participants before the dialogue, the summary of the dialogue, and view or listen to the interviews with dialogue participants. For an electronic copy of the issue brief or dialogue summary, or to view or listen to the interviews, visit our website www.mcmasterhealthforum.com and click on ‘Products’ along the sidebar, or for direct access to our YouTube and iTunes U channels, simply click on the icons below.