



Topic Overview

Citizen Panel and Stakeholder Dialogue

Taking a Step Towards Achieving Worry-free Surgery in Ontario

The McMaster Health Forum convened a citizen panel on the subject of taking a step towards achieving worry-free surgery in Ontario convened on 29 September 2017, followed by a stakeholder dialogue on the same subject convened on 30 October 2017 that was informed by the insights captured at the panel. The panel and dialogue were funded by: 1) the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact in the Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University, through a grant from the Impact Agenda 2020 Research Project Fund; 2) McMaster University's Labarge Optimal Aging Initiative; and 3) the Population Health Research Institute (an institute of McMaster University and Hamilton Health Sciences), which operates with support from CIHR's Strategy for Patient Oriented Research, through the Ontario SPOR SUPPORT Unit. The panel brought together 11 citizens from the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area and Southwestern Ontario. The dialogue brought together 19 participants – one policymaker, five managers, nine healthcare professionals, one researcher, and three stakeholders – to examine the problem, elements of a potentially comprehensive approach for addressing it and key implementation considerations.

Insights from citizens about the problem

Panellists began by reviewing the findings from the pre-circulated citizen brief, which highlighted what is known about the underlying problem – shortfalls in peri-operative risk assessment and management in Ontario – and its causes. They individually and collectively focused on six sets of challenges in particular: 1) 'worry-free surgery' can mean different things to patients, families and other stakeholders; 2) more surgeries are being performed, which creates challenges for society as a whole; 3) surgery-related complications have serious consequences for everyone; 4) how we assess and manage risk with surgery patients is not always optimal; 5) peri-operative risk assessment and management is not always delivered based on the best available data, evidence and guidelines; and 6) health-system-level factors make it difficult to support the widespread uptake of optimal peri-operative risk assessment and management.



A total of 11 citizens from the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area and Southwestern Ontario gather during a McMaster Health Forum citizen panel on 29 September 2017.

Photos include participants and McMaster Health Forum staff.

Insights from citizens about the elements

After discussing the challenges, panellists were invited to reflect on three elements of a potentially comprehensive approach for achieving worry-free surgery in Ontario. When deliberating about strategies that could help to change the behaviours of health professionals and patients in order to support the use of clinical-practice guidelines (element 1), safety and excellent patient experiences emerged as two of the most prominent values. The deliberations then turned to the use of financial levers to improve risk assessment and management for surgery patients (element 2). Efficiency (value for money) emerged as the most prominent value during these deliberations, with panellists expressing mixed views about the efficiency of providing financial rewards to professionals and organizations for adhering to clinical-practice guidelines, and to patients for adhering to pre- and post-surgical instructions. Panellists then deliberated about broader system changes that they viewed as needed to improve risk assessment and management for surgery patients (element 3). In emphasizing the values of continuously improving and equity, panellists discussed the need to support current quality-improvement initiatives across the province and to ensure that broader system changes did not compromise equity.

Insights from citizens about the implementation considerations

When turning to potential barriers and facilitators to moving forward, panellists focused on the need to create a burning platform (or strong ‘business case’) for promoting worry-free surgery. This burning platform should rest on three key pillars: research evidence, professional experiences, and patient and family experiences.



A total of 19 participants drawn from government and from health, professional, research and stakeholder organizations gather during a McMaster Health Forum stakeholder dialogue on 30 October 2017.

Photos include participants and McMaster Health Forum staff.

Stakeholders' deliberation about the problem

The deliberation about the problem initially focused on the concept of 'worry-free surgery.' There were mixed views about the concept, with some dialogue participants expressing concern that it implied that there would no longer be surgery-related complications, and others seeing its value as a call to action that health-system leaders and stakeholders should respond to.

Deliberations then turned to the shortfalls in peri-operative risk assessment and management in Ontario. In addition to the features of the problem articulated in the evidence brief, participants highlighted four additional challenges: 1) lack of timely access to surgical care; 2) lack of patient information and education about peri-operative risk assessment and management; 3) lack of integrated post-surgical care approaches (including care pathways and shared decision-making); and 4) limited availability and contextualization of peri-operative data.

Stakeholders' deliberation about an approach

In deliberating about the elements of a potentially comprehensive approach to taking a step towards achieving worry-free surgery in Ontario, dialogue participants generally agreed about the need for system-wide interventions to strengthen the continuum of peri-operative care.

In discussing element 1 (strategies to support the implementation of optimal peri-operative risk assessment and management), participants highlighted the need for combining robust research evidence, concrete examples of optimal practices and patient stories, and peer pressure to bring about the needed behavioural changes among professionals and hospital managers. In addition, participants emphasized the need to more effectively leverage existing infrastructure and programs to support quality-improvement initiatives.

For element 2 (financial arrangements that support the implementation of optimal peri-operative risk assessment and management), participants highlighted the need for more flexibility in hospital budgets, and the right financial incentives for professionals and hospital managers to support the uptake of clinical-practice guidelines.

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Stakeholders' deliberation about an approach... cont'd.

Lastly, for element 3 (broader system arrangements that support the implementation of optimal peri-operative risk assessment and management), participants focused on the need to better align accountability and authority within the system, streamline care pathways, enhance technological infrastructure, and adjust public reporting to ensure professionals and organizations are treated fairly.

Stakeholders' deliberation about next steps

Participants prioritized seven actions as part of a first step towards achieving worry-free surgery in Ontario: 1) spreading awareness among health-system leaders of the importance of streamlining peri-operative risk assessment and management; 2) supporting existing communities of practice to build quality-improvement capacity among health-system stakeholders; 3) supporting the development of training opportunities for professionals to support optimal peri-operative risk assessment and management; 4) working with partners across the health system to establish a consensus on what peri-operative data should be collected, and to make data more easily available; 5) exploring the types of small-scale innovation projects that could be designed to optimize peri-operative care and to help build the case for the uptake of clinical-practice guideline recommendations; 6) developing a research agenda to strengthen peri-operative risk assessment and management; and 7) pursuing stakeholder-engagement initiatives to advance an agenda towards achieving worry-free surgery.

Panel and dialogue deliverables

To learn more about this topic, consult our complete [set of products](#), which include: the citizen brief that was presented to citizens before the panel, the evidence brief that was presented to dialogue participants before the dialogue, the summary of the panel, the summary of the dialogue, and the video interviews with dialogue participants.

Products addressing other topics are also available on our website www.mcmasterforum.org.

Click on 'Find evidence>Products' in the menu.