The McMaster Health Forum convened a stakeholder dialogue on the subject of addressing the integration of clinical nurse specialists and nurse practitioners in acute healthcare settings in Canada. With the support of the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Canadian Nurses Association and Health Canada, the dialogue brought together participants – two policymakers, four managers, twelve healthcare professionals, three researchers, and two other stakeholders – from across Canada to examine the problem, elements of an approach for addressing it, and key implementation considerations.

The views expressed in the issue brief are the views of its authors and the views expressed in the dialogue summary are the views of the dialogue participants (as understood by its authors). The views should not be taken to represent the views of the funders or the McMaster Health Forum. The logos of the funders are shown on the next page.
Deliberation about elements of an approach

Many dialogue participants agreed that a sequence of steps offered promise:
1) convening a national dialogue for clinical nurse specialists (and possibly a separate one for nurse practitioners) to address role clarity, the value proposition, key competencies, outcomes/metrics and educational programs;
2) convening a multi-stakeholder national dialogue about which health professionals are needed, in what ‘doses’ and using what approach to selection and training in order to meet the needs of patients and achieve the goals of the health system;
3) supporting a move towards credentialing and purpose-built educational programs for clinical nurse specialists and towards addressing the distribution of specialty training programs and improving the regulatory process for nurse practitioners;
4) undertaking information/education campaigns focused on acute healthcare innovations that are enabling more and better care.

Deliberation about implementation

A key barrier to implementation was considered to be the lack of funding for the proposed national dialogues and the limited pool of (already overstretched) leaders who can be called on to make them a success on top of the many other roles that they are already performing. One dialogue participant noted that implementation will proceed much more smoothly if decisions are made at each juncture about whether separate activities are needed for each of clinical nurse specialists and nurse practitioners working in acute healthcare settings or whether there are sufficiently similar issues to warrant combining them.

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.

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