

## Topic Overview

### Optimizing Clinical Practice in Ontario Based on Data, Evidence and Guidelines

#### Stakeholder Dialogue 6 March 2015

The McMaster Health Forum convened a stakeholder dialogue on the subject of optimizing clinical practice in Ontario based on data, evidence and guidelines. With the support of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the Government of Ontario (through a Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Health System Research Fund grant entitled Harnessing Evidence and Values for Health System Excellence), the dialogue brought together 22 participants – eight policymakers and managers, five healthcare professional leaders, five researchers, and four other stakeholders – from across Ontario to examine the problem, elements of a potentially comprehensive approach for addressing the problem, and key implementation considerations.

#### Deliberation about the problem

Dialogue participants generally agreed that the problem can be understood in relation to the five themes presented in the evidence brief: 1) clinical practice in Ontario is not consistently being optimized based on data, evidence and guidelines; 2) yet Ontario is home to some of the world's best data, evidence, guideline and implementation 'shops'; 3) these 'shops' support optimal practice with different perspectives and little coordination; 4) health-system arrangements also aren't being effectively harnessed to optimize clinical practice; and; 5) no big initiatives appear to be on the way to systematize and scale up efforts to optimize clinical practice. Participants focused in particular on how a lack of coordination (i.e., the third theme) limits system-wide practice-optimization efforts. However, they also pointed 'upstream' to two key contributors to the problem, namely limited long-term planning (particularly in terms of clearly articulating goals and sustainably allocating the resources needed to achieve those goals), and the lack of a clear governance model and accountability for practice optimization.



*The views expressed in the evidence brief and dialogue summary are the views of the authors and should not be taken to represent the views of the funders.*





Participants drawn from government, health organizations, health professional associations and research centres gather during a McMaster Health Forum event on 6 March 2015

## Deliberation about an approach

During the deliberations about the three elements of a potentially comprehensive approach to addressing the problem, participants generally agreed with one participant who stated that “where we want to get to is for all patients to get the highest quality of care. What we need is a roadmap for how to get there.” However, while there was agreement with the overall goal of creating a roadmap for practice optimization in Ontario, participants expressed mixed views about what the roadmap should look like. Most participants ended up converging on support for what some called a ‘mixed economy approach’ to optimizing clinical practice, which would mean defining a set of practical goals in the short and medium term and aspirational goals in the long term. Participants also generally agreed on the need for developing a ‘toolbox’ that supports the use of a manageable number of promising processes to optimize clinical practice. Participants also consistently emphasized that the activities included in each of the approach elements will require meaningful stakeholder engagement to ensure that priorities reflect local realities, and that approaches to addressing them are adapted accordingly.

## Dialogue deliverables

To learn more about this topic, consult the [evidence 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 evidence brief or dialogue summary, or to view or listen to the interviews, visit our website [www.mcmasterhealthforum.com](http://www.mcmasterhealthforum.com)

## Deliberation about next steps

Participants articulated four priorities for moving forward: 1) pursuing opportunities to foster the cross-sectoral collaboration that will be required to have an impact on optimizing clinical practice in Ontario; 2) promoting greater local engagement and generating public awareness of progress made towards optimizing clinical practice as ways to foster the necessary cultural change; 3) focusing on identifying key barriers that are likely to hold up progress and targeting the investment of resources accordingly; and 4) collaborating on several research priorities, such as making tools that support optimal practice more usable for real-life settings, developing a ‘simplified Ontario framework’ for practice optimization, and taking coordinated action to better support initiatives that are designed to provide healthcare professionals and patients with access to the knowledge needed to narrow the evidence-to-practice gap.