

Topic Overview

Addressing Health and Emerging Global Issues in Canada

Stakeholder Dialogue

12 May 2011

The McMaster Health Forum convened a stakeholder dialogue on the subject of addressing health and emerging global issues in Canada. Production of this report has been made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada. Both this issue brief and the stakeholder dialogue it was prepared to inform were made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada's International Health Grants Program. Additional financial contributions to support the participation of key individuals in the stakeholder dialogue were provided by the British High Commission to Canada, McMaster University (through both the Office of the Vice President, Research and International Affairs, and the Office of the Associate Vice-President, Academic, Faculty of Health Sciences), and the Norwegian Knowledge Centre for the Health Services (through a grant from Norad, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation). The Global Health Research Initiative provided funding for the translation of the issue brief and of the dialogue summary into French.

The dialogue brought together participants – four policymakers, two civil society representatives, two private sector representatives, three global health strategy contributors or advocates and five researchers – to examine the problem, options for addressing it, and implementation considerations.

Deliberation about the problem

Many dialogue participants agreed with the overall statement of the problem, namely that globalization has eroded the protective effect that national borders once offered to the health of Canadians, and that responses to these erosions have not always been commensurate with current and possible future challenges. However, several participants noted questions that this statement raised for them, such as what is the definition of health and who counts as Canadians. Many dialogue participants also agreed with the six emerging global issues that can affect the health of Canadians: 1) people are increasingly mobile and travel over longer distances than ever before; 2) cross-border trade of goods, services and investments has reached unprecedented levels; 3) agriculture is increasingly a single worldwide integrated market with food sourced globally; 4) damage to the environment and depletion of its resources is occurring at increasing speeds; 5) information and communication technology lets people connect across vast distances; and 6) issues are increasingly addressed through international law, regulations and standards.

However, several participants noted that any assessment of emerging global issues needs to capture the interdependence among issues and focus on opportunities as well as risks. A number of dialogue participants also agreed that the lack of collaboration across traditional divides complicates efforts to identify and address these issues, although a few dialogue participants noted that 'business as usual' does work in many situations, even if it may not be ideal.

Want to hear participants'
insights and reflections?

Visit the McMaster Health Forum
YouTube channel at

<http://tinyurl.com/youtube-globalhealth>





Participants representing policymakers, stakeholders and researchers, from within and beyond Canada, gather during a McMaster Health Forum event on 12 May 2011

Deliberation about options

Most dialogue participants saw value in elements of each of the options: 1) supporting mutual learning across sectors (e.g., through a process that facilitates both periodic and dynamic identifications of new issues, and that is both inward-looking and outward-looking) and mutual learning across governments (e.g., signing on to the Oslo ministerial declaration about global health, and participating in ongoing discussions with the other signatories); 2) providing a framework for government and stakeholder action; and 3) undertaking new initiatives that provide value for money, particularly the production of global public goods.

Deliberation about implementation

A number of success factors for the implementation of the key elements in the three options were identified by dialogue participants: 1) inspirational champions are in place in each cohort and sector; 2) ‘passionate and curious’ stakeholders are on board and excited by the goal; 3) strong networks are harnessed and get their respective shares in any credit that is due; 4) solid research evidence is accessed and used in working through what needs to be done and how; 5) compelling stories are prepared about tangible improvements that would benefit Canadians and the world; 6) space is created for risk-taking and innovation; 7) excellent communication keeps everyone ‘on the same page’; and 8) healthy debate is encouraged, but unhealthy turf protection is called out as such.

Additional financial contributors supporting stakeholder participation



Deliberation about next steps

Deliberations about next steps largely focused on the value of a forum to engage stakeholders (and, for some, policymakers as well) in setting agendas for addressing emerging global issues and taking well-considered actions. Some dialogue participants argued that leadership had to come from government so that there was an identifiable ‘place to go,’ a locus for leadership on the issue, the necessary convening power, and the resources to support stakeholder dialogue. Two dialogue participants argued that a key next step would be to reconceptualize health for Canadians.

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 and scroll down to the ‘Video’ section.

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