

Topic Overview

Developing a 'Rapid-response' Program for Health System Decision-makers in Canada

Stakeholder Dialogue 7 March 2014

The McMaster Health Forum convened a stakeholder dialogue on the subject of developing a 'rapid-response' program for health System decision-makers in Canada. With the support of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research through the Partnerships for Health System Improvement (PHSI) Planning Grant Program (grant #309184), the dialogue brought together 11 participants – eight policymakers, one manager, researchers, and two stakeholders – from across Canada to examine the problem, program features for addressing it, and key implementation considerations.

Deliberation about the problem

Dialogue participants generally agreed that health system decision-makers faced three general challenges when finding and using research evidence: 1) a lack of timely access to optimally packaged, relevant and high-quality research evidence (i.e., providing the right product at the right time); 2) inconsistent interaction between policy researchers and policymakers (i.e., having the right people developing products on the right issues); and 3) uncertainty about what success looks like. During the deliberation about these challenges, participants emphasized five specific challenges, including: 1) accessing the best available research evidence in a timely fashion; 2) contextualizing the research evidence; 3) accessing expertise, especially in complex areas for which there is only a limited body of research evidence; 4) building capacity to find and use research evidence; and 5) ensuring the confidentiality of politically sensitive requests.



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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.





Participants drawn from government and from organizations that provide support to government decision-makers gather during a McMaster Health Forum event on 7 March 2014

Deliberation about an approach

Dialogue participants agreed with many of the proposed organizational features of a rapid-response program, but suggested focusing initially on the “organic” development of a pan-Canadian network, with the McMaster Health Forum as a national coordinating hub. Participants also generally agreed about what can be done in what timelines, but questioned whether the three-business-day product would be requested often, whether jurisdictional scans about ‘who’s doing what’ could be offered as a fourth type of product, the feasibility of consistently preparing these products within the proposed timelines, and the possibility of translating the products so that they’re available in both of the country’s official languages. Participants also generally agreed with the four areas of success proposed in the issue brief – program organization, final product, influence on behavioural intention to find and use research evidence, and whether and how the product was used – but noted the challenges in the fourth area. They also agreed with the proposed measurement approaches – a brief survey administered following receipt of a product, and short qualitative interviews approximately six months later – but suggested exploring the possibility of capturing additional data from requestors (before responding to the request) and from others who could benefit from but didn’t make the request (e.g., download statistics).

Deliberation about next steps

Dialogue participants identified as significant challenges ahead both securing stable, long-term funding and finding a way to effectively and equitably manage the expected demand. In terms of next steps that could be taken, many dialogue participants indicated that they would support efforts to: 1) develop a common vision for the network; 2) explore how to link with organizations that could contribute to establishing and maintaining the rapid-response network, including research-funding agencies; 3) map the potential ‘nodes’ (i.e., key individuals and organizations) within their respective jurisdictions that could contribute to the rapid-response network and identify ways to bring them together; 4) find ‘kindred spirits’ in other provinces and territories (both individuals and organizations) that could join a pan-Canadian rapid-response network; and 5) encourage people to direct their health system-related questions to the newly established rapid-response network.

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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