

McMaster Health Forum programs



The McMaster Health Forum's goal is to generate action on the pressing health-system issues of our time, based on the best available research evidence and systematically elicited citizen values and stakeholder insights. We aim to strengthen health systems – locally, nationally and internationally – and get the right programs, services and drugs to the people who need them. Through Forum+, we are expanding our work to include social systems. **We can help you to:**

Learn how to make decisions based on the best available research evidence

Capacity building

The Forum provides online and in-person training about how to strengthen or reform health systems, and how to get cost-effective programs, services and drugs to those who need them, based on the best available research evidence. We also provide training in how to set agendas and develop and implement policies. This training is for policymakers and stakeholders, as well as researchers, journalists and students. It builds on the Forum's experiences in training thousands of health-system leaders from more than 60 countries. In partnership with the Ontario SPOR SUPPORT Unit, we also provide training for patients, providers, policymakers and researchers in how to conduct and use patient-oriented research.

Find evidence through our own products and the best available sources of pre-appraised, synthesized research evidence

Health Systems Evidence

The Forum created and now maintains Health Systems Evidence – the world's most comprehensive, free access point for evidence on how to strengthen or reform health systems and how to get cost-effective programs, services and drugs to those who need them. Policymakers and stakeholders can access the resource for free at healthsystemsevidence.org and register to use enhanced features, or to sign up to receive monthly alerts on topics of interest. More than 12,000 users have registered to date for Health Systems Evidence.

Social Systems Evidence

Social Systems Evidence is the world's most comprehensive, free access point for evidence about strengthening 16 government sectors and program areas, and achieving 14 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Policymakers and stakeholders can access the database for free at socialsystemsevidence.org and register to use enhanced features, or to sign up to receive monthly alerts on topics of interest.

McMaster Optimal Aging Portal

The Forum co-leads and provides the secretariat for the McMaster Optimal Aging Portal, which offers access to helpful, evidence-based information about the health and social aspects of aging, through direct and easy self-serve access for citizens, as well as clinicians, public health professionals and policymakers. Citizen-targeted content includes plain-language summaries of high-quality evidence that can be acted on, blog posts that bring the evidence alive with stories, ratings of free online resources that help to identify those based on strong evidence, and daily tweets about the day's media coverage of aging topics and the evidence behind the stories. Access the Portal at mcmasteroptimalaging.org and register for free today to stay on top of the latest information featured on the Portal.

Rapid response

Introduced by the Forum to fill the gap between the 'self-serve' option of using Health Systems Evidence (and soon Social Systems Evidence), and the 'full-serve' option of requesting a stakeholder dialogue informed by a pre-circulated evidence brief, this service offers a summary of research evidence on a particular health-system issue within three, 10 or 30 business days. Since the service's launch in 2015, the Forum has conducted more than 30 rapid syntheses, requested by organizations such as the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, two provincial ministries of health, and MedicAlert.

Ontario's health system book

The Forum's director has edited and, with key Forum collaborators, will periodically update a book to answer a commonly asked question: how does the Ontario health system work? The goal of this book is to help make the system more understandable to the citizens who pay for it and are served by it, the professionals who work in it (and future professionals who will one day work in it), and the policymakers who govern it. The book – entitled 'Ontario's health system: Key insights for engaged citizens, professionals and policymakers' – can be purchased through Amazon or key chapters can be downloaded for free from the Forum's website.

Spark action through stakeholder dialogues, citizen panels and more

Stakeholder dialogues

In 2009, the Forum pioneered the use of stakeholder dialogues – a form of deliberative process – to spur action on pressing health challenges. Each dialogue is informed by a pre-circulated, context-specific evidence brief that mobilizes both local data and studies and quality-appraised systematic reviews about a problem and its causes, options for addressing it, and key implementation considerations. The day-long deliberations elicit the tacit knowledge and real-world views and experiences of policymakers and stakeholders and identify next steps for different constituencies. The Forum has convened more than 50 dialogues to date and documented their impacts on decisions at all levels of the system, right up to the cabinet table.

Citizen panels

Having identified citizens' values and preferences as a missing ingredient in much decision-making about health systems, in 2013 the Forum began to convene citizen panels, initially as a stand-alone process but increasingly as an input to stakeholder dialogues where citizens' input can help to shape deliberations about how to address pressing challenges. Each citizen panel is informed by a pre-circulated citizen brief

and comprised of citizens who reflect diversity both in lived experience with the issue at hand and in their age, gender, ethnocultural background and socioeconomic status. The Forum has convened 36 citizen panels to date and documented how they've shaped both stakeholder deliberations and policy decisions.

Communities of practice

The Forum will soon be launching a new program focused on building, supporting and sparking action among communities of practice. These communities will provide opportunities for health-system leaders, citizens, researchers and students to engage in collective problem-solving about the pressing health challenges of our time.

Embed supports for evidence-informed decision-making, by institutionalizing promising and proven approaches

The Forum provides health-system leaders (policymakers and stakeholders) with a variety of resources and services to help them institutionalize promising and proven approaches to evidence-informed policymaking.

Evaluate innovations in supporting evidence-informed decision-making

The Forum's Impact Lab undertakes cutting edge research and research synthesis about how to support the use of research evidence in health systems, and it trains students and researchers to undertake such work. The Impact Lab capitalizes on the numerous research and evaluation opportunities created by the Forum's innovative programs and by its partners internationally, which collectively provide a 'natural laboratory' within which to study innovations in supporting evidence-informed health systems.

Forum+ >> Moving beyond health

The Forum's work now goes beyond the health sector. As Forum+, we are building on McMaster's expertise in advancing human and societal health and well-being in our efforts to strengthen social systems and get the right programs, services and products to the people who need them. Building on its creation of Social Systems Evidence, the Forum is well positioned to build capacity, prepare rapid syntheses, convene stakeholder dialogues and citizen panels, support communities of practice, and adapt other programs to the social systems space.

Let's collaborate

If you're a health- or social-system leader and want to discuss working with us to make an impact, contact us at forum@mcmaster.ca.

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- [@Mac_AgingNews](#) for news about optimal aging

>> Sign up for [Forum Update](#), our monthly e-newsletter with updates about upcoming events, new publications, and other activities

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- We encourage you to subscribe by logging into your free [Health Systems Evidence](#) or [Social Systems Evidence](#) account, or by creating a new account if you don't already have one. Once logged in, you can subscribe to our curated searches by choosing the 'saved searches' option from the account drop-down menu and then clicking the toggle button next to the search topic(s) that interest you, listed in the 'Curated searches' section of the page.

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