

Topic Overview

Supporting Optimal Screening Approaches in Canada

Stakeholder Dialogue 17 October 2013

The McMaster Health Forum convened a stakeholder dialogue on the subject of supporting optimal screening approaches in Canada. With the support of the Health Council of Canada, the dialogue brought together 19 participants – 5 policymakers, 6 managers, 4 healthcare professionals, and 4 researchers -- to examine the problem, elements of a comprehensive approach for addressing it, and key implementation considerations.

Health Council of Canada
Conseil canadien de la santé



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.

Deliberation about the problem

Dialogue participants expressed agreement with most aspects of the description of the problem in the evidence brief. This included over enthusiasm towards screening among consumers and providers, the consequences of sub-optimal screening (e.g., over diagnosis and the associated increases in healthcare resources consumed), and the limitations in system-level arrangements that contribute to sub-optimal screening (e.g., the lack of coordination for the delivery of the full spectrum of screening-related care and across sectors and jurisdictions). Participants raised several additional issues, including: 1) lack of emphasis on patient-centred approaches to screening; 2) tensions between organized and opportunistic screening and between ‘vertical’ program- and primary care-driven screening; 3) absence of a national vision and of approaches to support accountability across sectors and jurisdictions; and 4) limited scale and scope of evidence synthesis and recommendation development to support decision-making and implementation.





Participants drawn from government and from health, professional and research organizations gather during a McMaster Health Forum event on 17 October 2013

Deliberation about an approach

Dialogue participants generally agreed that features of each of the elements – coordinated decision-making, coordinated evidence synthesis and recommendation development, and supports for implementation – were needed. Deliberations about how to achieve greater coordination across sectors emphasized the need to strengthen primary care as a key point of contact for screening and to re-frame interactions with patients and providers to ones focused on how screening fits into the patient journey. In considering how to support greater coordination across jurisdictions, dialogue participants emphasized the need to: 1) document and share what is being done well and what could be improved or built upon; 2) adopt common goals and standards; 3) develop and implement processes to ensure accountability for meeting goals and standards; and 4) support collaboration to ensure consistency across jurisdictions.

Dialogue participants also indicated that avoiding duplication in conducting syntheses and developing recommendations was important, but any efforts to do so need to support ‘local’ processes to develop contextualized recommendations where appropriate. Lastly, dialogue participants emphasized the need for supporting quality improvement and accountability (e.g., through the use of performance metrics within and across jurisdictions) as part of broader support for implementation.

Deliberation about next steps

Key implementation considerations raised by dialogue participants included the need to build partnerships across sectors and jurisdictions, and to build a sense of urgency about the issue to gain traction in efforts to address it. Possible windows of opportunity that were highlighted by participants include rapid advancements in technology, ongoing efforts towards primary-care reform, and screening being an issue that one or more visible groups might be willing to champion.

Lastly, dialogue participants focused on three broad areas that were viewed as essential components of any next steps: 1) strengthening primary care and ensuring linkages to the broader spectrum of care needed for optimal screening; 2) fostering opportunities for exchanging innovations and best practices across sectors and jurisdictions; and 3) supporting a national/collective vision for screening.

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 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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