

Topic Overview

Addressing Health-system Sustainability in Ontario

Stakeholder Dialogue

29 November 2016

The McMaster Health Forum convened a stakeholder dialogue on the subject of Addressing Health-system Sustainability in Ontario. With the support of the Ontario Medical Association, the dialogue brought together 18 participants – 2 policymakers, 5 managers, 4 healthcare professionals, 5 researchers, and 2 stakeholders -- from across Canada to examine the problem, elements of a comprehensive approach for addressing it, and key implementation considerations.

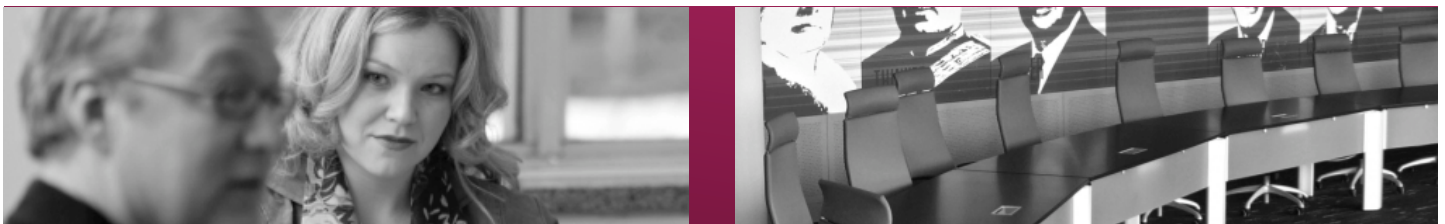


Deliberation about the problem

Participants were receptive to the framing of the problem in the evidence brief, with a number suggesting that the ‘drivers of change’ approach to the demand for and supply of healthcare was a helpful way to think about health-system sustainability challenges in Ontario.

However, deliberations about the problem led participants to identify a number of specific challenges in the province, including: 1) the health system is not fully meeting the needs of patients; 2) the health system is outdated and in need of modernization; 3) inefficiencies contribute to sustainability challenges, while new ‘technologies’ (including new drugs) threaten the publicly funded health system’s affordability; 4) there are a number of oversights in discussions about health-system sustainability that constrain our ability to understand sustainability in a comprehensive way; 5) the government has few levers to effect change; and 6) there is a dearth of political leadership in the health system.

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 funder.





Participants drawn from government and from health, professional and research organizations gather during a McMaster Health Forum event on 29 November 2016

Deliberation about an approach

In deliberating about the elements of a potentially comprehensive approach for addressing health-system sustainability, participants generally agreed that efforts need to focus on both demand-side challenges (element 1) and supply-side challenges (element 2), as well as on a change in types of leaders and shifts in governance (element 3).

In discussing element 1, participants highlighted the importance of strengthening links between public health and other sectors (such as primary care) and working towards establishing collective accountability for the health system by helping patients and the public to play a larger role in addressing demand-side sustainability challenges.

Turning to element 2, participants focused on the need to modernize the health system while balancing two important considerations: how to support evidence-informed decision-making and how to revise financial arrangements to align with system goals.

In discussing element 3, participants identified two types of leaders – leaders who promote a compelling and comprehensive vision for system transformation, and leaders who are willing to take political risks to ensure progress is made over the long term – and two types of governance shifts – changes to governance and accountability structures, and increasing the channels through which empowered citizens can exert pressure on elected politicians and other system leaders – needed to overcome what many participants called “health-system stasis.”



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Deliberation about next steps

In discussing who could do what differently, participants identified four opportunities: 1) tapping into Ontarians’ growing dissatisfaction with the health system and articulating a compelling and comprehensive vision for health-system transformation that ensures the sustainability of the system while staying true to our values; 2) engaging patients early and often in decision-making about reforming the health system; 3) using specific priority sectors (e.g., primary care, long-term care, and end-of-life care) as ‘test cases’ for determining the optimal approaches needed for strengthening the health system, and then scaling up these approaches once a groundswell of support is established; and 4) laying a foundation for health-system reforms that cannot easily be undone.

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 the interviews](#) with dialogue participants.

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