



Topic Overview

Citizen Panels and Stakeholder Dialogue

Modernizing the Oversight of the Health Workforce in Ontario

The McMaster Health Forum convened three citizen panels on the subject of modernizing the oversight of the health workforce in Ontario (on 11, 18 and 25 August 2017), followed by a stakeholder dialogue on the same subject (on 21 September 2017) that was informed by the insights captured through the panels. The panel and dialogue were organized with the support of the Government of Ontario and the Ontario SPOR SUPPORT Unit. The panels brought together a total of 37 citizens from across Ontario, and the dialogue brought together 25 participants – drawn from government, regional and provider organizations, professional associations and regulatory bodies, patient groups, and research centres – from across Ontario to examine the challenges in workforce oversight, elements of a potentially comprehensive approach for modernizing it, and key implementation considerations.



Insights from citizens about the challenges

Participants across the three panels identified six challenges that warrant modernizing the oversight of the health workforce in Ontario: 1) oversight bodies have not adapted to changes in the delivery of care; 2) having many bodies responsible for the oversight of the health workforce makes navigating the oversight system challenging and may be inefficient; 3) the oversight framework doesn't put enough emphasis on the soft skills and personalization required to provide high-quality patient-centred care; 4) oversight bodies have not been set up in a way that prioritizes the interests of patients; 5) finding information about health workers and their oversight bodies is difficult and there are limited opportunities for patients to contribute to oversight efforts; and 6) risk of harm needs to be identified and addressed across a patient's entire care pathway. While the first five of these challenges relate specifically to oversight, the sixth involves a broader health-system challenge that is made more complex given the current oversight framework.

The views expressed in the panel summary are the views of panel participants and should not be taken to represent the views of the Government of Ontario, the Ontario SPOR SUPPORT Unit, or the authors of the panel summary.



Thirty-seven citizens from across Ontario gather during McMaster Health Forum citizen panels on 11 August 2017 (Hamilton), 18 August 2017 (Ottawa) and 25 August 2017 (Sudbury).



Photos include participants and McMaster Health Forum staff

Insights from citizens about the elements of a potential approach

Panellists generally supported all three elements of a potentially comprehensive approach to modernizing the oversight of the health workforce: 1) use a risk-based approach to oversight; 2) use competencies as the focus of oversight; and 3) employ a performance-measurement and -management system for the health workforce and its oversight bodies. In discussing element 1, panellists stressed the need for equity in assessing risk across all categories of health workers and an efficient use of oversight resources. Panellists emphasized ‘soft skills’ (e.g., bedside manner, desire to continue to learn, and willingness to collaborate with other health workers) in the competencies required to deliver patient-centred care (element 2), and they called for a greater voice for patients in a performance-measurement and -management system (element 3).

Insights from citizens about the implementation considerations

When the deliberations turned to implementation, panellists identified as the key barriers to moving forward the difficulties associated with pursuing health-system change and maintaining political will and momentum, as well as the politics among professional regulatory colleges, professional associations, and other stakeholders. One panellist challenged health-system leaders to “not just [put] in place what is easiest politically, but what will actually make our system better.” Panellists noted a number of facilitators that may help to build political will for change, including recent news stories about patient harm and a general appetite among patients to improve the quality of the care they receive.



Twenty-five participants drawn from diverse organizations gather during a McMaster Health Forum stakeholder dialogue on 21 September 2017.

Photos include participants and McMaster Health Forum staff.

Stakeholders' deliberation about the challenges

Participants generally agreed with the evidence brief that there is a compelling set of factors that suggest the need to modernize the oversight of the health workforce in Ontario, including: 1) the existing oversight framework is no longer fit for purpose; 2) the media frequently draws attention to issues that may not warrant it; 3) politicians typically react to every issue regardless of its importance to the system as a whole; and 4) some professional associations are not advancing their members' understanding of the importance of protecting the public. The first factor closely aligned with many factors addressed in the evidence brief, including (among others): the oversight mechanisms in place have not kept pace with the changing health system; the current oversight framework is focused on regulating individual categories of health workers, rather than groupings of them, and captures some but not all health workers; and the oversight framework has a different focus than the framework used in the education and training of health workers.

Stakeholders' deliberation about the elements of a potential approach

In deliberating about how to modernize the oversight of the health workforce, most dialogue participants expressed support for drawing components from each of the three elements of the potentially comprehensive approach that was presented in the evidence brief: 1) use a risk-based approach to health-workforce oversight; 2) use competencies as the focus of oversight; and 3) employ a performance-measurement and -management system for the health workforce and its oversight bodies. Participants noted that the second element – using competencies as the focus of oversight – was the easiest transition given that competencies are increasingly the focus for education and training. As noted in the introduction to this section, dialogue participants generally embraced all three elements of the potentially comprehensive approach to modernizing workforce oversight, although for each element they noted three or four sub-elements that deserved more emphasis.

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Stakeholders' deliberation about approach elements... cont'd.

Dialogue participants also identified five cross-cutting themes that should be kept in mind when working through each element: 1) engage employers in oversight; 2) engage patients in oversight; 3) be more proactive in providing oversight; 4) balance consistency and flexibility in oversight across categories of health workers; and 5) ensure health workforce oversight is attuned to the vision for the health system's future, including the increased delivery of interprofessional care.

Stakeholders' deliberation about next steps

While recognizing that modernizing the oversight of the health workforce was the purview of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, dialogue participants indicated that they could play roles as individual leaders and as a group or sub-groups in pushing for action by government, advocating for changes to oversight that would yield measurable improvements in the health system, and building and maintaining support across their key constituencies. Some dialogue participants also noted the opportunity to complement a bolder vision with more incremental changes that yielded quick wins and created momentum for more.

Panels and dialogue deliverables

To learn more about this topic, consult our [complete set of products](#), which include: the citizen brief that was presented to citizens before the panels, the evidence brief that was presented to dialogue participants before the dialogue, the summary of the panels, the summary of the dialogue, and the video interviews with dialogue participants.

Products addressing other topics are also available on our website www.mcmasterforum.org. Click on 'Find evidence>Products' in the menu.