SITUATION CRITICAL: CANADIANS GIVE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM A FAILING GRADE

Raising Canada’s healthcare system back to world-class status provokes major discussion at National Health Leadership Conference in Charlottetown, PEI, June 15-16, 2015

A Report on Canadian’s Expectations of the HealthCare System revealed today that 70% of Canadians are very worried about falling through the cracks, especially when it comes to critical areas such as mental health, care of seniors, palliative care and hospital safety.

The report was released today by HealthCareCAN and the Canadian College of Health Leaders at the National Health Leadership Conference (NHLC) in Charlottetown, PEI.

Fear of falling through the cracks is highest in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec (79%) and lowest in Alberta (59%).

“If using a hospital puts you at risk of infection, you can’t access quality mental health care, frail seniors are left to their own devices until they fall into crisis, and palliative care is under-resourced, can we truly say we have a world-class healthcare system?” says Bill Tholl, President and CEO of HealthCareCAN. “This is a call for leadership, a call-to-action.”

Aging demographics and Canada’s fragmented system has Canadians worried. Access to vital health services account for much of Canadians’ dissatisfaction. Eight out of ten (82%) of Canadians expect they and their family will need more access to health services in the next five to 10 years, in part because 58% anticipate being responsible for the care of aging parents or grandparents.

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<th>Worry Factor of Canadian’s Expectations of the Healthcare System</th>
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<td>Canadians are most worried about:</td>
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<td>That not enough is being done for mental healthcare</td>
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<td>The system is not providing the care needed for frail seniors</td>
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<td>Inadequately resourced palliative care</td>
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<td>Under-investment in aging hospitals compared to roads and bridges</td>
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<td>The risk of hospital-borne infections</td>
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Proportions include Canadians who agreed strongly or somewhat. Poll of 1,230 Canadians 35 and over was conducting for HealthCareCAN by Ipsos Reid between May 12-27, 2015. Results are considered accurate with ±3.2%, 19 time out of 20.

There are also troubling disparities across Canada. For example, although a little over a third (35%) of all Canadians felt healthcare facilities in their area were out of date, it soared to 43% in Quebec and 41% in Atlantic Canada and dipped to a low of 29% in B.C. and Ontario. When it came to accessing high quality mental health care, the concern was highest in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and BC (all at 54%), and the Atlantic provinces (50%) and the lowest in Quebec and Alberta (both at 40%).
Further, the report showed two-thirds (64%) of Canadians worry our healthcare system is falling behind compared to other countries.

There’s independent evidence that public perception is accurate. A 2014 report by the Commonwealth Fund reported that of 11 developed countries, Canada’s healthcare system ranked 10th. Issues dragging Canada’s standing down included the safety, timeliness and efficiency of care.

“In the Commonwealth survey, the only factor in which Canada scored in the top five was cost, in which it was 5th out of 11,” says Ray Racette, President and CEO, Canadian College of Health Leaders. “But Canadians are telling us that cost isn’t the only issue – or even the most important issue. Although 89% think there could be better care if the healthcare system spent money more efficiently, half (52%) say they don’t care how the money is spent as long as the quality of care is high. So it’s not an issue of money so much as addressing what’s holding healthcare back from operating like a modern system and at optimal efficiency. It looks like Canadians are ahead of our leadership in accepting the need for innovation and to move from just universal health care to smart, innovative health care.”

Results of the HealthCareCAN poll found the public is more than ready to embrace the sort of changes needed to improve the efficiency of our healthcare system:

- Nine out of ten Canadians want more resources to be allocated to palliative care (90%), identifying the needs of frail seniors so they can stay at home as long as possible (90%), and improving the quality and accessibility of mental health care (91%).
- Nine out of 10 (86%) support the idea of a national electronic healthcare records system to improve system efficiency and give Canadians the information they need to improve their health. To make this happen, governments need to show Canadians they have resolved privacy and security issues: half (54%) are still not convinced they have been adequately addressed.
- Eight out of 10 (82%) don’t care which healthcare professional delivers services as long as they're qualified, as they (81%) already had good experiences with team-based care.
- Two-thirds (66%) believe drugs prescribed by doctors should be paid for as part of universal health insurance – even if it means paying higher taxes.

**CALL TO ACTION**

1. **Closing the gap**: Canada needs to get back to the top five in the next five years. This means better leadership and supporting the research necessary to better understand and manage care to Canadians at the same or reduced costs. The gap between demand and supply will otherwise continue to grow.

2. **Leadership by healthcare providers**: Better leadership is the number one enabler of better health system performance and better organizational performance. It starts with individual leadership based on the needs of patients. It also means...
healthcare leaders working better together to plan and organize healthcare systems for the future.

3. **Leadership from government:** Governments need to put in place the pan-Canadian policies, processes and programs to empower individual and collective leadership. Providers need to be invited to the table and the federal government needs to be back at the table.

4. **Connecting the dots:** There are pockets of excellence across Canada. This is the result of supporting and capitalizing on world-class research. The Federal Advisory Panel on Healthcare Innovation’s final report will be instrumental in initiating systemic change.

Presented by HealthCareCAN and the Canadian College of Health Leaders, the National Health Leadership Conference hosts more than 700 healthcare leaders from across the country. Keynotes and presentations will focus on driving a culture of engagement, innovation and improvement in Canada’s healthcare system. The Great Canadian Healthcare Debate is a unique forum giving health leaders the chance to pass resolutions aimed at helping policy-makers address the key healthcare challenges Canada now faces. The conference runs June 15-16 in Charlottetown, PEI.

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