Canada Health Infoway / Inforoute Santé du Canada

Driving Access to Care: Canada Health Infoway's Goals for 2018-2019

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Canadians are proud of our universal health care system, but despite the money we spend on it, research shows that our country ranks at or near the bottom in international comparisons of timely, equitable access to appropriate care.

A study of 11 countries published by The Commonwealth Fund in July 2017[1] found that only 57 per cent of Canadians, on average, can get same or next-day appointments with doctors. Out of frustration, they go to hospital emergency rooms, where 29 per cent of them reported waiting four or more hours to receive attention. Sweden ranked lower at 20 per cent, while France ranked first, with only one per cent having to wait that long. In terms of online access to health information, such as viewing lab results, Canada ranked third from the bottom, with only six per cent of people able to do so, while France ranked first at 27 per cent. As for the ability to email a doctor with a question, Canada ranked last at four per cent and France was again first, at 24 per cent.

Canada needs to do better. We need to "flip the script" and improve access to care and access to health information for all Canadians, especially those who are most vulnerable and have the greatest need. Improving access will result in better health outcomes and healthier, more productive citizens.

Digital health solutions can help us turn things around, so Canada Health Infoway (Infoway) has developed a strategy called **Driving Access to Care**. Over the next four years (2018-2022) we will focus on large, multi-jurisdictional or pan-Canadian projects to empower Canadians and strengthen their care teams. We will:

- Put patients and their families at the centre of everything we do;
- Ensure providers have the right tools to deliver optimal care;
- Focus on initiatives that deliver meaningful positive impact to Canadians, including improved patient experiences; and
- Establish strategic partnerships and alliances with public and private sector organizations to leverage their collective power to drive innovation.

This is an ambitious strategy, so every year we will outline specific goals and performance expectations in our Summary Corporate Plan, which is essentially our business plan for the fiscal year. Our 2018-2019 Summary Corporate Plan defines two strategic goals, which are to:

- Provide safer access to medications, starting with PrescribeIT™, a multi-jurisdiction e-prescribing solution; and
- Provide Canadians and their providers with access to personal health information and digital health services.

We will support these goals by providing ongoing national digital health leadership in areas such as privacy, security, solution architecture and standards, interoperability, clinical engagement, change management, and benefits evaluation.

Our goals for 2018-2019, as well as our broader **Driving Access to Care** strategy, are aligned with the federal government's health care priorities, including tackling the opioid crisis, and

addressing needs like homecare, mental health services and services for Canada's Indigenous Peoples. They are also aligned with the health care priorities of the provinces and territories.

We see Infoway's role as being a catalyst for change — a constructive disruptor of the status quo. It won't be easy to "flip the script" so Canada ranks at or near the top in international comparisons of timely, equitable access to appropriate care. But we are committed to leading the way by working with our government and other partners to maximize the potential for digital solutions to transform our health systems.

I invite you to read our 2018-2019 Summary Corporate Plan, available at www.infoway-inforoute.ca/plan

Follow him on Twitter @MGreenonHealth

[1] Mirror, Mirror: How the U.S. Health Care System Compares Internationally at a Time of Radical Change, The Commonwealth Fund, July 2017.

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