


**Strengthening Health Systems Through Innovation:
Lessons Learned**

November 2011

Executive Summary

Leadership



Every OECD country in the world is challenged by the increasing demands for health services, and the rising costs of health care associated with rapid advances in technology and aging populations. Canada is facing similar challenges, yet has made less progress in meeting these demands when compared to other countries. The question is: how can Canada learn from these countries in order to more adequately prepare for the future of growing demands on health systems?

This executive summary provides an overview of key findings and recommendations from the International Centre for Health Innovation's white paper, *Strengthening Health Systems Through Innovation: Lessons Learned* (Snowdon, A. and Cohen, J., 2011). The white paper examines the progress made within the health systems of seven comparator countries as a way to learn from strategies that have led to progress in health system redesign and transformation to meet population health needs more effectively.

The seven comparator countries selected for this analysis are the following: United Kingdom (U.K.), Australia, Germany, Netherlands, France, Switzerland, and the United States (U.S.). Each of these countries has demonstrated progress and achievements in using innovation to transform health systems, and is commonly compared to Canada on quality of outcomes and innovation.

There are three key global health system challenges threatening the health care systems of industrialized countries around the world:

1. Shifts in population and social characteristics;
2. Balance between containing costs while maintaining access and quality, and
3. Fragmented health care delivery models and bias towards acute vs. chronic illness service delivery.

No single country has managed to completely transform their health system to achieve sustainability; however, a number of countries have made impressive strides in various areas to improve the quality of care delivered and health outcomes for the population.

The comparative study of the countries profiled in this analysis focused on four strategic areas: integration of health services across the continuum of care, accountability for health care in communities, financial models that drive competition, and the role of consumers in engaging in the management of their own health and wellness.

Learnings from the successes in these countries serve as a foundation for three key recommendations for the Canadian health care system. These recommendations are intended to be a catalyst for dialogue among health system leaders, consumers, health professionals, and key stakeholders in the health sector as a basis for achieving advancements in innovation adoption in the Canadian health care system.

Recommendation 1:

Create a new, consumer driven culture in Canada's health care system. Transform the current, traditional, highly "prescriptive" approach to health care into one that places consumers at the centre of service delivery models. Foster a culture that shifts the balance of power from the health provider to the consumer, whereby consumers take charge of managing their own health and wellness and health professionals assume a supportive role of coach and mentor. In this emergent culture, health providers focus on creating the environment and conditions for consumers to thrive, to be empowered, and to drive health system transformation. Key strategies to achieve this cultural shift are:

- Redesign health service environments to create consumer choice. Engage consumers directly in the choice of providers and selecting health services that meet their personal health and wellness goals. Create financial incentives using insurance programs, or personal health budgets, that empower consumer decision-making to drive competition and innovation among health system stakeholders.
- Educate and train the next generation of health professionals as expert coaches and mentors who use entrepreneurial thinking and leadership to drive change and innovation adoption to transform health care environments.
- Focus innovation on leveraging information technologies and systems to improve health literacy in the Canadian population, as a basis for empowering consumers to set priorities in managing their personal health and wellness, which will stimulate improvements in quality and safety of health services.

Recommendation 2:

Transform Canada's health system from a dominant acute care focus to a community-based system focused on chronic illness management and prevention. Implement accountability and financial incentives driven by population health outcomes. Global health systems that have been able to shift health care services to chronic illness management in communities have been able to demonstrate substantial improvements in reducing the reliance on acute care services to manage chronic illness exacerbations, particularly among the elderly.

Specific strategies to advance community-based chronic illness management are:

- Create accountability systems whereby health providers, and physicians in particular, assume 24/7 responsibility for managing health and wellness in communities.
- Develop new community-based models of service delivery and remuneration that support a coordinated and integrated approach to chronic illness management across the continuum of care in a seamless system of care delivery.
- Create financial incentives within the health system that reward and motivate health professionals to achieve population health outcomes that reflect high-quality, evidence-based care.

Recommendation 3:

Create a national strategy for health system innovation based on best evidence that is empirically driven and captures the impact of innovation across the continuum of care. Build the evidence for innovation adoption that achieves consumer

engagement within collaborative health care environments, in a coordinated and integrated approach to health and wellness. Evidence-based innovation would be characterized by dynamic knowledge translation models across provincial and territorial jurisdictions to support learning about innovation outcomes to build momentum to drive Canada's health system innovation agenda. To move towards a national strategy for health innovation, Canada should:

- Create a coordinated approach to proof of concept testing of new innovations that empirically measures system-level impact and evidence of knowledge transfer and exchange.
- Develop a performance management system within the health system that examines and captures the impact of knowledge translation of innovations on both system performance and population health across the continuum of care.
- Create the empirical evidence for implementation of new health services to achieve quality standards of care as well as national and strategic goals for a sustainable health care system.

Conclusion:

As we confront the question of how we continue to sustain and improve health care, one of the critically essential areas that demands action is our ability to adopt innovation in our health system. In order to achieve this, it is critical that we continue to grow our leadership capacities. We must also reshape the existing traditional culture of health care into one that engages consumers as empowered partners in managing their own health and wellness. Finally, we must be able to make the case for innovation adoption by empirically measuring and capturing the impact of innovation on health system sustainability and patient outcomes.

About the Centre

The International Centre for Health Innovation, established in 2009, is situated within the Richard Ivey School of Business at The University of Western Ontario. As the only health centre in a business school focused on innovation adoption, we are dedicated to being a catalyst for a health system that is sustainable, productive and embraces innovation. The Centre:

1. Cultivates leadership capacity through educational and leadership development programs targeting current and future leaders in the health system,
2. Emphasizes education that equips students and program participants with the ability to identify, understand, embrace and implement innovation in real health sector environments,
3. Empowers and builds collaborative partnerships between government, industry, clinicians, health sector stakeholders, researchers and funders to drive innovation adoption,
4. Supports and disseminates knowledge and evidence that our leaders need to embrace innovation, drive change and improve the productivity of our health care system and of our economy.

For further information on the Centre and how it is changing the culture of innovation in Canada, visit:

International Centre for Health Innovation
www.ivey.ca/healthinnovation