

Sustainability & Resilience in the Canadian Health System

Responding to the Need for Best-in-Class Service Delivery



Managing the flow of patients from diagnosis to treatment and maintenance of long-term health can be a complex journey to navigate. As part of its study across multiple domains, research from The Partnership for Health System Sustainability and Resilience (PHSSR) in Canada examined current trends in primary care and coordination, persistent system inequalities and what the pandemic revealed about maintaining services in a crisis.

Where Service Delivery Stands Today

The doctor will see you now... in some cases. While family physicians are often the first point of contact for patients, it is estimated that six million Canadians don't currently have one. There are also fewer family physicians offering comprehensive primary care over time, and they aren't always integrated with other health and social services. Service delivery can be even more challenging for those struggling with multiple chronic conditions, and mental health and substance use issues.

While virtual care options have expanded significantly amid the pandemic, Canada continues to face hurdles in terms of capacity in areas such as acute care, and not enough investment and standardization in services to support aged care at home or in residential facilities. We only have to look back on the wave of COVID-19 death in long-care homes to see how fragile this sector has become to external shocks.

How to Bring Healthcare to Where it's Needed Most

Getting the right care, where and when it is appropriate is not about looking for shortcuts. Instead, policymakers and healthcare system stakeholders should concentrate on the following:



Reform and scale primary care services

Patients should have a central hub that simplifies service delivery across the healthcare continuum from prevention and screening to diagnostics, treatment, and palliation. At the same time, this is a moment to explore innovative models where primary care consists of an interprofessional team that optimizes the available workforce.



Meet patients where they are – but measure and iterate to ensure quality

Policy and funding changes allowed virtual care to be rapidly adopted early in the COVID-19 pandemic. While technology offers potential to reduce strain on emergency rooms and bolster physician-specialist referral processes, more work needs to be done to ensure equitable access, e.g., in remote areas, and in reporting on the performance of virtual service delivery models.



Plan for service delivery across the course of an entire life

The longer Canadians live, service delivery strategies should take into account the full spectrum of acute and long-term care services and supports they will need.

There are **seven domains** researched in this study:

- GOVERNANCE
- FINANCE
- WORKFORCE
- TECHNOLOGY & MEDICINE
- **SERVICE DELIVERY**
- SOCIAL DETERMINANTS
- ENVIRONMENT

Learn more about the research findings and key recommendations by reading the full report, *Sustainability and Resilience in the Canadian Health System*, or contact the PHSSR at PHSSR@hkstrategies.ca

