

Overview

The Challenge: Health Research and Health Care

Canadian health research has a global reputation for excellence. Despite the quality of this research, Canada faces a challenge in turning this powerful information into high-quality and cost-effective care.

Currently, 50% of patients do not get treatments of proven effectiveness, and up to 25% get care that is not needed – or potentially harmful. This care is also expensive. In 2013, Canada was projected to spend more than \$211 billion on health care, or close to \$6,000 per person.

The Solution: Canada's Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research (SPOR)

SPOR is a national coalition of federal, provincial and territorial partners (patient advocates, provincial health authorities, academic health centres, charities, philanthropic organizations, pharmaceutical sector, etc.) dedicated to the integration of research into care – the right patient receives the right treatment at the right time.

Patient-oriented research refers to a continuum of research that engages patients as partners, focuses on patient-identified priorities and improves patient outcomes. This research, conducted by multidisciplinary teams in partnership with relevant stakeholders, aims to apply the knowledge generated to improve health care systems and practices.

It produces information for decision makers and health care providers that will improve health care practices, therapies and policies. And it ensures that new and innovative diagnostic and therapeutic approaches are applied when and where needed.

Elements of SPOR

Achieving the goals of SPOR involves mobilizing the expertise and resources of stakeholders who have come together in support of these various elements of the Strategy.

SUPPORT Units

SUPPORT Units are provincial or regional centres designed to support those engaged in patient-oriented research. They are locally accessible, multidisciplinary clusters of specialized research resources, policy knowledge and patient perspective. They provide the necessary expertise to help pursue patient-oriented research and help lead reforms in response to locally driven health care needs. The acronym "SUPPORT" stands for "Support for People and Patient-Oriented Research and Trials."

SUPPORT Unit core functions

- data platforms and services
- methods support and development
- health systems, knowledge translation, and implementation
- real-world clinical trials
- career development in methods and health services research
- consultation and research services

Networks

SPOR Networks are national collaborative research networks involving the full range of SPOR stakeholders (patients, health professionals, decision makers, health researchers and other stakeholders). They focus on specific health challenges identified as priorities in multiple provinces and territories. They pursue research and generate evidence and innovations designed to improve patient health and health care systems.

SPOR Network objectives

- establish priorities and develop a nation-wide agenda of outcomes-oriented research
- develop and implement evidence-informed practices, policies, services, products and programs to improve patient outcomes, access to care and the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of care
- accelerate the translation of new knowledge into clinical applications, practice and policy
- strengthen the capacity to conduct patient-oriented research through training and mentoring initiatives

Developing Capacity

There is a need to train and mentor health professionals and researchers in order to build Canadian expertise in patient-oriented research. SPOR will improve Canada's capacity to attract, train and mentor these professionals and researchers, and to create sustainable career paths in patient-oriented research.

This will be achieved through a SPOR capacity development framework, which will articulate a vision for patient-oriented research and outline what is needed from stakeholders to increase the breadth and depth of patient-oriented researchers in Canada. In addition, training, mentoring and career support are included as important components of SPOR Networks and SUPPORT Units.

Improving our Competitiveness in Conducting Clinical Trials

Canada is experiencing a decline in private sector clinical research. The number of clinical trial applications submitted to Health Canada has been steadily declining – from 776 in 2007 to only 537 in 2011.

Clinical trials are a key element of SPOR. The Canadian Clinical Trials Coordinating Centre (CCTCC), a collaborative effort of CIHR, Canada's Research-Based Pharmaceutical Companies (Rx&D), and the merged organizations of the Association of Canadian Academic Healthcare Organizations and the Canadian Healthcare Association (ACAHO/CHA), was created to help reverse the decline in clinical trial investment in Canada and improve the clinical trial landscape. This will be achieved through the coordination of clinical trial activities and the streamlining of regulatory processes for companies and researchers.

Patient Engagement

The involvement of patients is an integral part of SPOR and ensuring investments in health research are relevant to patients. This includes patients meaningfully and actively collaborating in the governance, priority setting and conduct of research, as well as in summarizing, distributing, sharing and applying its resulting knowledge.

SPOR has developed a patient engagement framework, to be published in June 2014, that outlines key opportunities for action, setting the stage for worthwhile collaborations in determining health research priorities as well as in the design and conduct of research projects.

For More Information

Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research (SPOR)

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