

Supporting innovation and choice in Canada's health care sector

Consolidated Responses from CIHI

October, 2020

1. Are there ways that policies can better support innovation, choice and access to digital health care solutions? For example, do specific rules unnecessarily impact the ability to offer virtual products and services to Canadians? Please explain.

- Would establishing a pan-Canadian rule for any technical solution businesses/vendor to use established pan-Canadian technical and content standards be an option? Using this approach would help potentially with avoiding issues with optimal uses and integration.
- Further advancing policies on Health System Uses of the health care (clinical) data in an appropriate secure and private fashion.

2. What other barriers are impeding Canadians' access to virtual care and restricting innovation and choice in the health care sector? Can these barriers be reduced—and, if so, how—in order to facilitate the entry and expansion of digital solutions?

- Canada has a small market overall which gets further sub-divided based on jurisdiction custom requirements which restricted opportunities for scaling. Given that the industry in Canada is not as mature, we rely on US and international companies in Canada.
- Other examples of barriers:
 - Lack of interoperability of systems
 - Lack of integration of systems
 - Lack of appropriate level of internet bandwidth (e.g. in rural and remote regions)
- The barriers identified can be reduced through a coordinated pan-Canadian effort (e.g. development and mandatory implementation of common content and technical standards in Canada). Alignment on standards may provide an opportunity to make Canada a larger player.
- A focused investment to modernize the pan-Canadian infrastructure is required in reducing the barriers (e.g. improving internet access, implementing newer technologies). From a human resource perspective, education to improve literacy in technology is an important factor. Addressing current privacy and security legislation and educating the public would be critical.
- Thinking about application of machine learning (AI) and other tools to facilitate the uses of the digital solutions.
- In the discussion and implementation of innovative virtual care approaches, patients and families need to be included early in the discussion. They are the most important key partner in the initiative. Their perspective will be extremely valuable in moving forward and addressing early some of the (real life) challenges.

3. What measures have other jurisdictions taken to improve access to virtual care? How have barriers to innovation and choice been eliminated, while balancing legal and regulatory requirements in the delivery of digital health care solutions? Can similar measures be adopted in Canada? Why or why not?

- See above. There are challenges with the scaling of virtual care solutions in Canada given custom requirements by jurisdiction.

4. What impact has the COVID-19 pandemic had on innovation and choice in Canada's health care sector, and on Canadians' ability to access health care virtually? Have any barriers hindered the adoption of digital solutions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic? Please explain.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has created an opportunity to speed-up implementation of virtual care and the recent experience has already highlighted learnings on some of the challenges:
 - 'One size fits all' does not necessary work because each jurisdiction is at a different point in their health care technology implementation
 - Privacy and Security legislation may require reviews; interpretation and clarification required
 - Realization that not all health care visits are possible using virtual approaches (still need face-to-face)
 - The need for education support for patients/families when using virtual approaches