

BACKGROUNDERS FROM ONTARIO'S DOCTORS

Effective health systems around the world have learned that in order to improve, governments require the input and sustained engagement of their frontline doctors. The people of Ontario know this to be true, too. Ontario's doctors are committed to working with government to tackle hallway medicine and improve mental health, palliative care services, long-term care, and digital health, while addressing physician burnout at the systems level.

Ontario's doctors have perspective on a number of key concerns for health care as we work with Ontario's government to work towards better, transformative care for Ontarians.



WAITING FOR CARE

Wait times are one of the biggest health care problems facing Ontario's patients today. Week after week, we're treating patients in hallways, forced to cancel surgeries, and watching our patients wait to get the care they need. Simply put, patients have to wait far too long, far too often.

Ontario has world-class doctors, hospitals, health professionals and organizations. The problem is not our providers, but rather the lack of funding that makes us wait.

In a recent Ontario Medical Association survey, 63% of doctors said that if they could tell the government one thing, it would be that government needs to appropriately fund the health care system. Appropriate funding will lower wait times and allow us to better care for our growing and aging population.

Ontario's doctors are far too familiar with the frustration and pain that wait times cause.



LONG-TERM CARE

Nobody wants our loved ones to wait for care. We can't bear to think of our parents languishing on a wait list to get into a long-term care home. But sadly, this is a reality for many in Ontario.

According to Health Quality Ontario, the current wait for a long-term care bed in Ontario is 149 days. In some communities, like Ottawa, it's almost two and a half years! For patients awaiting placement, these days are spent in a hospital bed, or at home relying on their families for care.

We know that many patients require more complex care arrangements, which often includes assisted living or residential care. Research suggests that with proper community supports, many people are able to stay in their homes, reducing pressure on the system for those who need residential care.

Ontario's doctors recognize that home care is a key element in the care of our aging patients. We ask the government to work with doctors and home care experts to help strengthen community supports to help those who are able to stay at home as long as possible.

Some patients are best served by a bed in a long-term care facility. These facilities should allow patients to maintain independence and safety, while providing the care they need. Unfortunately, in recent years government funding has not kept pace with the growing demands for long-term care beds. As our population ages, we ask the government to invest the necessary funds to address the wait times in our long-term care system.



MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Physicians are finding it increasingly difficult to access mental health services for patients. The OMA is pleased to welcome the Ontario government's recent announcement for infrastructure to support mental health and addictions services.

The shortage of mental health services across this province should be addressed to ensure timely, equitable access for patients in need.

In Ontario, more than 12,000 children and youth are waiting up to 18 months for mental health treatment. Some patients are waiting up to six days for a mental health bed in hospital.

The diagnostic, consultation and treatment services provided by Ontario's doctors are essential for people suffering with mental illness and addictions.

Family physicians and specialists assume a unique and distinct role in providing clinical treatment. Ontario needs the government to invest in appropriate community-based initiatives that include a focus on psychiatric treatment.

DID YOU KNOW?

- 1 Family doctors are the first point of contact for the majority of those seeking mental health services.
- 2 By 2041, 8.9 million Canadians will be living with mental illness.
- 3 In Canada, hospitalizations for self-harm among youth aged 10-17 increased 85% between 2006-2014.



DIGITAL HEALTH

Ontario's doctors support the use of digital health initiatives that enable us to provide patients with high-quality care.

The government has the opportunity to ensure that new digital health innovations are integrated with existing electronic systems (such as the electronic medical record or EMR) to ensure a seamless flow of information.

Physicians are key users and contributors to Ontario's digital health system, so we know what is needed to provide the best patient care. It is essential for the government to involve physicians in the decision-making process so that we can best represent the challenges and opportunities in rolling out a functional system. New digital health advancements that are premised on efficiency should improve delivery of care while minimizing unnecessary administrative processes.

There is opportunity for the rollout of the electronic health record (EHR) to physicians in Ontario to be broader and faster, in order to achieve meaningful use of the system.

For more information, please visit:
oma.org

