

EVIDENCE IN THE MAKING



GIVING THE PUBLIC A VOICE

Engaging the Public in Health Technology Assessment

THE CHALLENGE:

The importance of involving patients and the public in the decision making process about their health care is widely acknowledged. This is a challenging task for governments and health organizations responsible for evaluating health technologies where patient and public values must be considered alongside evidence about what works and at what cost. What is the best way to incorporate patient and public perspectives into the assessment of health technologies? Who should be involved, how and to what end?

Research: Dr. Julia Abelson of McMaster University is examining how governments and health technology assessment (HTA) bodies, specifically Health Quality Ontario and the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee, can engage patients and the public in the HTA process. The study's reviews of published and grey literature and organizational websites, as well as key informant interviews, highlight varied approaches to engaging patients and publics, motivated by different – and sometimes conflicting – goals and rationales. Evidence about what works is limited and difficult to generalize. The HTA landscape is changing rapidly – there is increased pressure for rapid HTAs, greater emphasis on health care for complex diseases, and limited capacity of HTA organizations to engage patients and publics. As a result, strengthening patient and public engagement requires a carefully designed and flexible approach. The results of the research are directly informing Ontario's strategy for involving patients and publics in HTA and may be applicable to other jurisdictions as well.

Sources: Gauvin, F.P., Abelson, J., Lavis, J.N., *Evidence Brief: Strengthening Public and Patient Engagement in Health Technology Assessment in Ontario* (Hamilton: McMaster Health Forum, May 8, 2014): www.mcmasterhealthforum.org/docs/default-source/Product-Documents/evidence-briefs/public-engagement-in-health-technology-assestement-in-ontario-eb.pdf?sfvrsn=2

Visit the signature initiatives web page to learn more about CIHR's health and health system research priorities: www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/43567.html.