



Why Health Care Renewal Matters: A Case for Action on Chronic Health Conditions

By: Health Council of Canada

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The Health Council of Canada is creating a three-year series of reports that examine the health outcomes of people with chronic health conditions as a marker of the effectiveness of our health care system and the importance of health care renewal. Chronic health conditions affect the health and quality of life of a large number of Canadians and represent a growing health and economic challenge in Canada. The Health Council recognizes that improving the prevention and management of these conditions requires concerted and immediate action within health care but also in other areas of public policy that influence the health and well-being of Canadians.

Our **TOP 10 REASONS** to concentrate efforts on health promotion, disease prevention, and chronic disease management are as follows:

- 1) The burden of chronic health conditions on Canadians, the health care system, and our economy is enormous and growing. Canadians with chronic conditions account for over 70% of all nights spent in hospital.
- 2) One in three adults in Canada, or close to nine million people, report having at least one of seven high-impact, high-prevalence chronic conditions. More than one-third of these people have multiple long-term health problems.
- 3) Many people with chronic conditions suffer complications that add to their health problems and reduce their quality of life. Half of Canadians with multiple chronic conditions report moderate to severe disability in daily living.
- 4) More Canadians are developing chronic conditions because of rising risks such as obesity.
- 5) Chronic conditions are more common among older Canadians (77% of people 65 years or older have at least one chronic condition), among some ethnic groups, and among people with low income — but chronic conditions cut across all ages and circumstances.
- 6) The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that at least one-third of the total economic and social burden of disease in developed countries is caused by a handful of largely avoidable risks: tobacco, alcohol, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and obesity.
- 7) The WHO has determined that most benefits from reducing these risks will accrue within a decade, and even modest changes in risk factor levels can bring about large improvements in the health of populations. Modest lifestyle changes, such as losing four kilograms over three to six years, have been shown to dramatically delay or prevent the onset of diseases such as diabetes in high-risk populations.
- 8) The quality of chronic illness care in Canada could be greatly improved: less than half of Canadians with diabetes, for example, get all the laboratory tests and procedures that experts recommend to prevent complications of the disease.
- 9) Underuse, overuse, and inappropriate use of medications are ongoing concerns, and prescribing practices can vary widely across the country. Too few people with diabetes, for example, receive medications that are effective at preventing cardiovascular problems and more than half of people with diabetes have poor heart health.
- 10) Investing in prevention pays off—in lower health care costs and a healthier society.

To learn more about what the Health Council of Canada has to say about chronic health conditions, including their impact on health and the health care system, and what we recommend, we invite you to read the series of reports available on our website, www.healthcouncilcanada.ca.

Report 1



Why Health Care Renewal Matters: Lessons from Diabetes **March 2007**

This report examines the quality of care that Canadians with diabetes receive and compares it to recommended clinical practice guidelines for care. The report suggests ways to enhance delivery of care and tells the story of several projects that have been successful in improving the health outcomes of people with diabetes.

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Report 2



Why Health Care Renewal Matters: Learning from Canadians with Chronic Health Conditions **December 2007**

This report examines the quality of care from patients' perspectives, as they share their experiences with primary health care and chronic illness care including health promotion and disease prevention services. The report also highlights activities underway across Canada that are focused on preventing chronic disease and improving the quality of care.

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This report is accompanied by three supplements:



Population Patterns of Chronic Health Conditions in Canada

Using the 2005 Canadian Community Health Survey, we present in-depth results on the prevalence of seven select chronic health conditions and how they relate to use of health care and quality of life.

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Canadians' Experiences with Chronic Illness Care in 2007

From the 2007 first Canadian Survey of Experiences with Primary Health Care, we report on access to and quality of care among adults with seven high-impact / high-prevalence chronic health conditions.

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Health Care Renewal and Chronic Illness: Report on a Public Consultation

Here we report on what we heard from close to 2,000 Canadians in 2007 about their priorities for health care and health promotion.

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Report 3 (2008) - Stay Tuned!

ABOUT THE HEALTH COUNCIL OF CANADA

Canada's First Ministers established the Health Council of Canada in the 2003 *Accord on Health Care Renewal* and enhanced our role in the 2004 *10-Year Plan to Strengthen Health Care*. We report on the progress of health care renewal, on the health status of Canadians, and on the health outcomes of our system. Our goal is to provide a system-wide perspective on health care reform for the Canadian public, with particular attention to accountability and transparency.

The Council's vision

An informed and healthy Canadian public, confident in the effectiveness, sustainability and capacity of the Canadian health care system to promote their health and meet their health care needs.

The Council's mission

The Health Council of Canada fosters accountability and transparency by assessing progress in improving the quality, effectiveness, and sustainability of the health care system. Through insightful monitoring, public reporting, and facilitating informed discussion, the Council shines a light on what helps or hinders health care renewal and the well-being of Canadians.