



COMMUNIQUÉ FOLLOWING NOVEMBER 2, 2006 “NATIONAL PAYERS’ FORUM”

Successful ‘Payers’ Forum’ demonstrates case for more integration in healthcare policy-making
Recent national forum hosted by Canadian Council on Integrated Healthcare suggests there is value in greater engagement of public and private payers within Canada’s healthcare system

Toronto, Ontario, November 2006 --

Background to the forum:

“Let’s Get Engaged” was the official title of a national ‘Payers’ Forum’ organized by the Canadian Council on Integrated Healthcare (CCIH) on November 2, 2006 in Toronto, Ontario.

The CCIH -- whose mission is to inform Canadians about emerging healthcare issues, with a vision of an integrated system -- originally outlined the need for such a forum in various earlier publications (for example, its 2002 discussion paper on Workplace Health).

Insights gained from a round table of Canadian employers in May 2005 further convinced the CCIH that greater interface and collaboration between employers and public policy makers is needed as part of the solution to the many challenges facing Canada’s healthcare system.

As a result of this earlier work, the CCIH decided to host a ‘Payers’ Forum’. The event was designed as a unique opportunity for constructive and solutions-oriented dialogue between public policy makers and employers.

The forum objectives were:

- 1) To explore potential synergies created by public sector and employer engagement in healthcare policy;
- 2) To make recommendations for improved collaboration.

By hosting the event, the CCIH sought to gather valuable perspectives from a broad range of stakeholders on needs and opportunities for change. Perspectives gained from the forum will be incorporated into future recommendations published by the CCIH.

More about the forum:

More than 50 people from various stakeholder groups across Canada attended the forum, including large and small employers in the public and private sectors, association representatives, government representatives at various levels, public policy analysts, and others. This wide spectrum of attendees, in itself, validated the CCIH message of integration – that is, the diverse groups present were clearly willing to look for areas of common ground and opportunity.

The notion of integration was also emphasized in opening remarks by CCIH Chair Dr. Russell King, who described Canada’s healthcare system as a connected ‘continuum’.

Speakers at the event, including keynote Judith MacBride-King (formerly of the Conference Board of Canada) and two panelist leaders who represented public and private sector perspectives, were invaluable in providing context that encouraged attendees to exchange views.



Participants were also able to ‘test drive’ what it was like to consider needs and solutions relating to several key healthcare challenges *by working together*. In small group sessions, they tackled: prescription drugs, access to health care, disability management (with a focus on mental health), private care clinics, and health promotion and disease prevention.

What happened at the forum? It was abundantly clear both from the day itself and from participants’ feedback that there was a real desire to share and to seek solutions collaboratively. Attendees expressed that they were grateful to move beyond rhetoric toward meaningful dialogue. Perhaps one participant expressed it most succinctly: “The energy and enthusiasm exceeded anything I expected. With this sort of passion, change is possible.”

Some specific outcomes from the forum:

Through the forum:

- *Common ground was identified* – for example, around issues of demand management through prevention.
- *The importance of understanding was emphasized*. One attendee put it this way: “I hope this will be viewed as just a beginning as we need more sessions like this to understand the complexity of the issues before we will come to consensus on solutions.” It was recognized that dialogue in a collaborative atmosphere can actually help bring views together.
- *It was reinforced that* (again in the words of a participant) *“health is everyone’s/every stakeholder’s problem and responsibility.”* It was also agreed that a variety of private payers, not just employers, need to become more engaged in healthcare policy creation.
- *There was confirmation of a real appetite for collaboration and open communication*. One attendee expressed it like this: “Glad you included so many different voices. We may not always agree with each other’s perspectives but if we don’t listen, we will never move forward. Collaboration and integration can only come when we agree on what we are trying to fix and how we might begin to fix it.”

Next steps:

The positive feedback from the forum confirms for the CCIH that there is a real need for vehicles and opportunities for different payer groups in Canada’s healthcare landscape to come together and exchange views and information, and to work in an integrated fashion.

The CCIH has committed itself to forward the progress made at the forum. Responding to the call for action, the CCIH is, among other things, currently working on further initiatives to move this important discussion along in a meaningful and solution-oriented way.

Contact information:

For further information about the Payers’ Forum (including a background paper released by the CCIH prior to the event) or about the CCIH, please contact us by e-mail at info@ccih.ca or visit our website at www.ccih.ca