

Mississauga Halton Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) Francophone Community Consultation - May 9, 2009

The LHIN invited representatives of the francophone community in the LHIN area to discuss the proposed strategic and integration priorities and enabling strategies to be included in the LHIN's Integrated Health Service Plan for 2010–2013. This session was one of a number of focused consultations planned with groups of stakeholders over in April and May. Staff and members of the Board of Directors of the LHIN have been attending these sessions and listening closely to the feedback. The stakeholders' perspectives will also be an important part of the discussion with participants in the Citizens' Reference panel this June.

The participants in this session considered the proposed priorities for the Integrated Health Service Plan:

- Improving access, quality and sustainability of the health system
- Enhancing seniors' health, wellness and quality of life
- Integrating mental health and addictions services
- Prevention and management of chronic conditions

They also discussed the three broad categories of enabling strategies:

- Primary health care
- eHealth strategy
- Health human resources

The following is a summary of general comments about health services and themes arising in the discussion on the individual proposed priorities and strategies. ***Some of the issues raised do not fall within the work of the LHIN, but they are recorded here to fully capture the participants' views.***

General Comments

- Prevention and wellness and the health needs of children and youth should be added to the list of priorities.
- The respective roles, activities, and responsibilities of the LHIN and the Ministry of Health should be made clearer. The LHIN should communicate the details of any agreement on French-language services between the LHIN and the ministry to the francophone community.
- The new IHSP should explicitly mention French services, set out the results of the consultations and next steps, and include a process for monitoring the success of initiatives.
- The LHIN Board should have francophone representation, and the LHIN should appoint a staff member to spearhead improved services in French.

Proposed Priorities

Improving access, quality and sustainability of the health system

- Francophones have the same concerns about the health system as others do, but with the added problem of lack of access to services in French. A key point is enforcing language rights. Services concentrate on the most prevalent foreign languages and often fail to provide services in French because the francophone population is relatively small. Under the law, the number is irrelevant, but it does influence the allocation of resources.
- The wait for services in French is often so long that people opt for service in English. This gives the wrong impression of demand. The community often does not know about the services that do exist and needs a directory of health services and volunteer groups.
- Information should be gathered on the health care needs of the francophone community, including data on the relative prevalence of diseases.
- All health services should be able to share patient records. Health records for francophone patients should be maintained in French.

Enhancing seniors' health, wellness and quality of life

- Community Care Access Centres should have French-speaking staff available.
- There is a shortage of francophone home care workers. Access to home care services should be explicitly mentioned in the priority.
- Outreach to French-speaking seniors should be undertaken to help them identify the help or services they need.

Integrating mental health and addictions services

- Integration of mental health and addictions services should be multidisciplinary, including prevention, pharmacists, and other supports.
- Public education is needed to remove the stigma of mental illness and to help people recognize mental health and addictions. Education should begin in schools.
- The caregivers of mental health patients need respite opportunities and supports. Health professionals making home visits should be alert to the needs of caregivers as well as patients.
- More monitoring for patients is needed after medications are prescribed.

Prevention and management of chronic conditions

- Hypertension should be included in the focus of this priority.
- Patients should get disease management training as soon as they are diagnosed, combined with follow-up at specific intervals to make sure that they are managing their health effectively.

Enabling Strategies

Primary health care

- The LHIN should have a French-language medical centre. The centre would also be a hub for sharing information and resources and access to online services. This “one-stop shopping” approach would reduce costs.
- There should be an up-to-date directory of health professionals who provide service in French.

eHealth Strategy

- There is a need for better-quality translation of the health-related information available electronically.
- The eHealth strategy for diabetes management should be set out in more detail.

Health human resources

- Health-care services should have professional interpreters available to accompany patients.
- Foreign-trained francophone practitioners could act as interpreters while awaiting recognition of their credentials.
- The lack of health care services in French discourages young people from pursuing a health career. This perpetuates the shortage. Education institutions should liaise with French schools to encourage applicants.