

Facing the Facts

Issue

INFORMAL CARE

The human & financial cost of informal caregiving in Canada

Facts

- Estimated 75–90% of home care is provided by informal caregivers (Health Canada survey 2005)
- 27% of Ontarians have personally cared for a family member or close friend with a serious health problem in the past 12 months. Nationally:
- 35% of 45 to 54 and 55 to 64 year-olds have provided care
- Almost 1 in 10 respondents—9%—had to quit work to care for loved one
- 41% of those caring for a family member or close friend had to use personal savings to survive during this time
- 22% had to take one or more months off work to provide care
- 41% of respondents reported that the result of caring for a family member or close friend had a negative impact on their mental health
- 38% reported that the experience had a negative impact on their physical health
- 40% reported that the experience had a negative impact on their finances
(POLLARA, in partnership with national health-care organizations, undertook the Health Care in Canada Survey in Sept. 2006.¹)

Response

To better understand the role and requirements of this undervalued population—and the policy implications that flow from that—The Change Foundation will devote some of its research resources to this issue. Given our reliance on informal caregivers, what policy changes and personal supports need to be put in place?

The Change Foundation is a policy think tank that generates research, analysis and informed discussion on key and emerging health system issues, starting with the integration of health-care services in communities across Ontario.

www.changefoundation.com

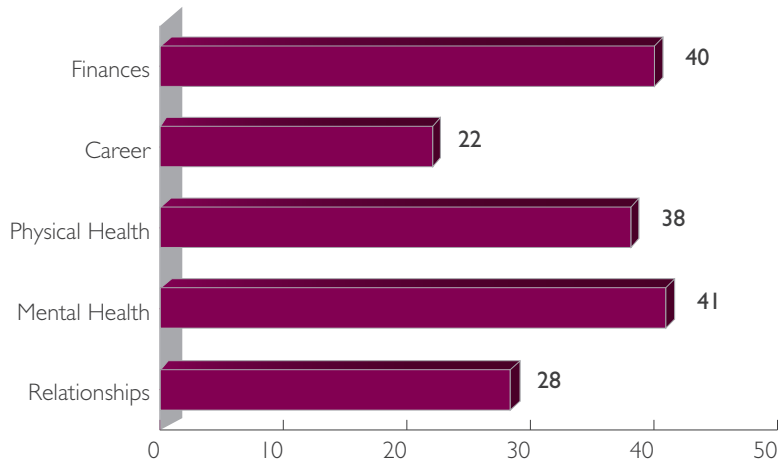


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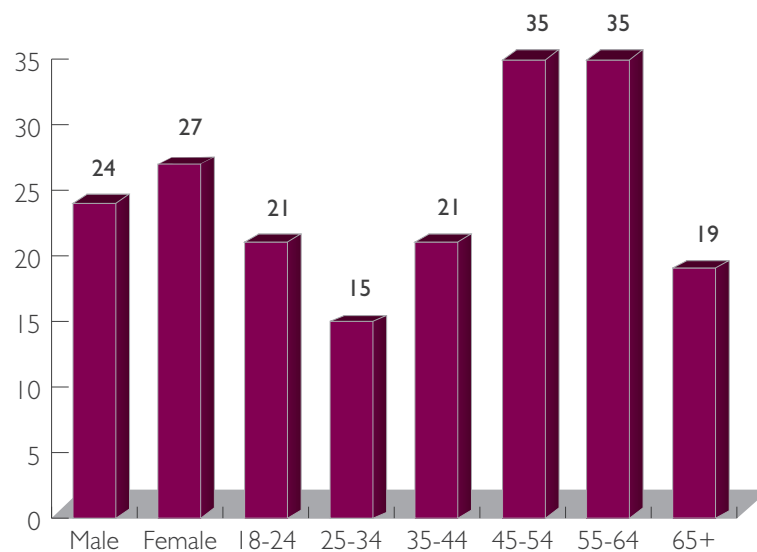
HEALTH CARE DESERVES
OUR FINEST THOUGHT

¹ See: www.pollara.ca/health.html for complete survey results.

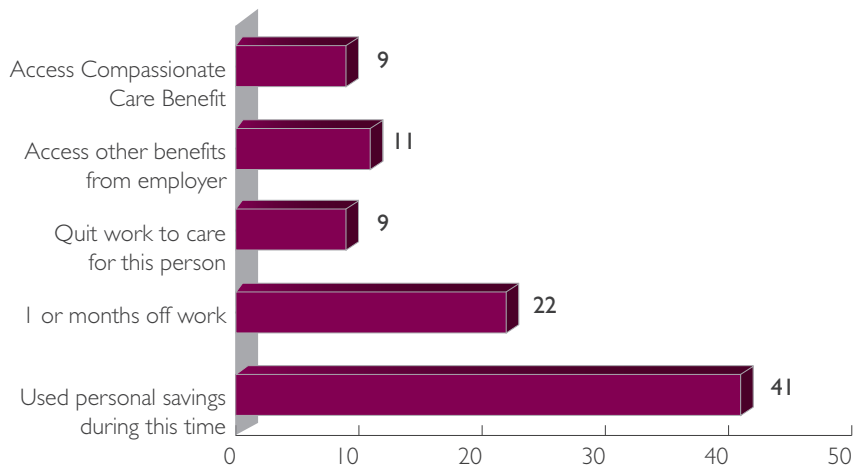
% People Experiencing a Negative Impact When Caring for a Family Member or Close Friend with a Serious Health Problem, 2006



% of Canadians Who Cared for a Family Member or Close Friend with a Serious Health Problem in Past 12 Months, 2006



Result of Caring for a Family Member or Close Friend with a Serious Health Problem, 2006



Facing the Facts

Issue

HOW INTEGRATED IS OUR HEALTH-CARE SYSTEM?

Patient perspectives/physician experiences

Facts

41% of surveyed Canadian patients being discharged from hospital either didn't know who to contact with questions about their condition or treatment, or didn't receive instructions about symptoms to watch/when to seek further care, or had no follow-up arrangements made by their hospital. That extrapolates to more than 409,000 patients in Ontario. (Based on CIHI 2005 patient discharge numbers)

24% of surveyed Canadian patients reported that in last 2 years either test results/records were unavailable at appointment or their doctor reordered tests.

In Canada, 42% of surveyed doctors reported that records/clinical information unavailable at appointment; 20% reported tests/procedures were repeated because findings unavailable; 46% reported "problems" because care not coordinated across sites/providers.

(From a 2005 Commonwealth Fund international survey¹ of patients and a 2006 international survey of primary care physicians.)

Findings from focus groups, comprised of cancer patients, conducted summer 2007 by the Cancer Quality Council of Ontario², included:

- Very little interaction with family physician after referral to specialist
- It was unclear who was responsible for communicating results to them
- Test results not always available at family physician visit; test results go missing so patients carried copies of records/test results from one health-care professional to another to avoid delay
- There was more likely to be breakdown in communication if tests were performed in different locations (hospitals, cities, etc.)
- Significant delays in getting a diagnosis without family physician

Response

The Change Foundation is dedicated to supporting the integration of health services in Ontario. Public and provider perspectives and experiences can provide invaluable information for improving health-care quality, re-thinking how care is delivered, and building a more integrated health system. To learn more, go to: www.changefoundation.com

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¹ See www.commonwealthfund.org for methodology and results of the *2005 International Health Policy Survey of Sicker Adults in Six Countries*, and the *2006 International Health Policy Survey of Primary Care Physicians in Seven Countries*.

² See www.cancercare.on.ca/index_qualityCouncil.htm; *Patients' Perception of the Peri-Diagnostic Period*; Virginia Flintoft.



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HEALTH CARE DESERVES
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A 2005 Commonwealth Fund international survey¹ of patients in six countries—Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, United Kingdom and United States—found shortfalls and variations in all countries in delivering integrated, high quality, patient-centred care. Data from the survey points to failures to communicate and coordinate to ensure high quality care.

Deficiencies in Transition Planning When Discharged from Hospital (Base: Hospitalized in past 2 years)						
% of patients reporting that when discharged:	Can	Aus	Ger	NZ	UK	US
Hospital Did Not make arrangements for follow-up visits	30	23	50	23	19	27
Did Not receive instructions about symptoms to watch, when to seek further care	17	18	23	14	26	11
Did Not know who to contact with questions about condition or treatment	12	9	12	9	12	8
% any of the above	41	36	60	33	37	33

Care Coordination						
% of patients saying in the past 2 years:	Can	Aus	Ger	NZ	UK	US
Test results, records not available at time of appointment	19	12	11	16	16	23
Physician ordered test that had already been done	10	11	20	9	6	18
% who experienced either coordination problem	24	19	26	21	19	33

Missed Opportunities to Engage Patient in Care (Base: Adults with chronic disease)						
% of patients saying physician:	Can	Aus	Ger	NZ	UK	US
Does Not give you clear instructions	24	19	18	15	27	27
Does Not make goals and plans clear	19	19	21	16	27	25
Does Not tell you about treatment choices or ask your opinion	38	45	39	38	51	49

¹ See www.commonwealthfund.org for methodology and results of the 2005 *International Health Policy Survey of Sicker Adults in Six Countries*, and the 2006 *International Health Policy Survey of Primary Care Physicians in Seven Countries*.