

# 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 survey<sup>1</sup> 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 Ontario<sup>2</sup>, 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](http://www.changefoundation.com)

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.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.commonwealthfund.org](http://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*.

<sup>2</sup> See [www.cancercare.on.ca/index\\_qualityCouncil.htm](http://www.cancercare.on.ca/index_qualityCouncil.htm); *Patients' Perception of the Peri-Diagnostic Period*; Virginia Flintoft.



THE CHANGE FOUNDATION

HEALTH CARE DESERVES  
OUR FINEST THOUGHT

A 2005 Commonwealth Fund international survey<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> See [www.commonwealthfund.org](http://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*.