

How to improve health care in Canada

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Expanding public funding for cost-effective treatments, investing in primary care, embracing technology and engaging patients are some of the ways Canada can improve the quality of health care, according to an analysis in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

"The quality of health care in Canada is good, but arguably not great," write Drs. Irfan Dhalla and Joshua Tepper of Health Quality Ontario.

"With thoughtful change, we could all benefit from a health care system that provides safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable and patient-centred care at every opportunity."

The article looks at the quality of health care in Canada and outlines strategies to improve it at the system level.

"We generally focus our attention at the national level; inevitably, this obscures important differences within Canada, between provinces and territories, and also between groups (e.g., Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians)," write the authors. "Also, although we focus here on health care, this does not diminish the importance of income, housing, education, social networks and other determinants of health."

The authors suggest the following to improve care:

- Expand [public funding](#) for treatments shown to be cost-effective—for example, funding psychotherapy for people with depression
- Invest in primary care—there is still a gap in [primary care](#), and efforts should move beyond payment reform alone to improve this important area
- Use electronic information systems that help doctors work together—growing evidence speaks to the benefits of health care records that can be accessed by patients and physicians alike
- Engage patients to help determine what services should be offered—for example, patients at a large Ontario family practice clinic suggested new ways to improve services that staff had not considered
- Standardize and embed quality-improvement tools, such as guidelines—this will help standardize practice and reduce

variability based on clinical knowledge or available resources

- Improve transparency
- Ensure meaningful involvement of physicians—decision-makers should involve physicians early in efforts to improve health care
- Ensure health education supports high-quality care
- Support wellness of [health care](#) professionals

The authors hope that decision-makers will consider these suggestions as a way forward for improving [health care](#) quality in Canada.

More information: Irfan A. Dhalla et al. Improving the quality of health care in Canada, *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (2018). DOI: [10.1503/cmaj.171045](https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.171045)

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