



ENHANCING
INTERDISCIPLINARY
COLLABORATION IN
PRIMARY HEALTH
CARE INITIATIVE

Teamwork: E-news from the Enhancing Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Primary Health Care (EICP) Initiative

Letter from the Steering Committee

The EICP Steering Committee has launched into the hard work of synthesizing all that has been heard and learned in the past six months about interdisciplinary collaboration in primary health care in Canada. We've conducted 28 separate consultations, including a major **Leaders' Forum** and five separate workshops on the **key barriers and enablers** associated with interdisciplinary collaboration. And our commissioned research is beginning to flow in.

So, now it is our turn to use all the input to refine our thinking. We're working on new snapshots of the EICP Principles and Framework elements. The snapshots are the simple, high-level story we have to tell. Behind them is a lot more detailed work that backs up our proposals for the principles and key framework elements, and gives them context. It is one thing to say that Health Human Resources (HHR), for example, is a key element, when building a system that supports teamwork in primary health care; it is quite another to explain what that means and how HHR issues might be addressed to enhance interdisciplinary collaboration. We are also working on further development of the principles and framework, so they show **real leadership** and stand up to the scrutiny of the public, health care providers involved in primary health care, health administrators and educators, and the governments that manage and fund health care.

On our near horizon are **Leaders' Forum 2** in June and an intense **consultation/ratification period**, during which time we will ask national health care professional organizations to endorse our proposed principles and framework.

It is worth telling you that the work of the EICP Steering Committee is instructive in and of itself. Our encounters are more productive each time we meet and our appreciation for the diversity within our professions—not to mention the rich resource they offer to the public—intensifies, as well. We've come to be extremely proud of, and committed to, our work together.

EICP Steering Committee

- Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists
- Canadian Association of Social Workers
- Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists
- Canadian Medical Association
- Canadian Nurses Association
- Canadian Pharmacists Association
- Canadian Physiotherapy Association
- Canadian Psychological Association
- College of Family Physicians of Canada
- Canadian Coalition on Enhancing Preventative Practices of Health Professionals
- Dietitians of Canada



EICP Principles and Framework

Endorsing the EICP Principles and Framework

When making a case for enhancing interdisciplinary practice and collaboration next spring, the EICP Steering Committee will seek to gain support for its principles and framework from the health community. Accordingly, a **comprehensive consultation/ratification plan** has been developed with the hope that organizations represented on the Steering Committee will formally endorse the EICP principles and framework.

The steps in that plan include:

- Refinement of principles and framework elements by the EICP Steering Committee (Spring 2005)
- Internal consultations for Steering Committee organizations (Spring through Autumn 2005)
- Presentation of principles and framework elements at Leaders' Forum 2 in Montreal (June 5 & 6, 2005)
- Initiative informs and engages the broader health community about the proposed principles and framework (Summer 2005)
- Principles and framework amended based on consultations (Autumn, 2005)
- Consideration of potential endorsement or ratification by boards represented by Steering Committee members (Fall – Winter 2005)
- Pending results of above, public signing of principles and framework (Winter 2005–2006)
- Development of an implementation toolkit by the EICP Initiative (Ongoing)
- Meetings with federal, provincial and territorial governments (Ongoing)
- Completion of EICP toolkit (Spring 2006)
- Dissemination of final principles and framework, and the EICP toolkit, to interested parties (Spring 2006)
- Finalization of principles and framework elements by the EICP Steering Committee (April 2005)

Spotlight on Collaboration

Canada's beacon of interdisciplinary collaboration is shining brightly from Southern Alberta, where there are no tall buildings, trees or mountains to block the long view. Taber is a town known for its big sky, excellent sweet corn and now, for great primary health care—ask anyone who knows the scene, and the Taber Project comes up.

You can tell from the spark in his voice that Dr. Rob Wedel, one of the project's founders, is a committed advocate for interdisciplinary collaboration. He confirms that collaboration in Taber is working very nicely for both the patients and providers. "It's easy to measure success here in Taber," he says. "If your patients leave for Lethbridge, you know you're doing something wrong. Well, that's not happening by a long shot."

(To read the rest of this story, visit our web site at www.eicp-acis.ca and look for the Spotlight on Collaboration).



What's New?

EICP Research Reports

Three more research reports are up on our web site. Below is a brief overview of each report. Please click on the title of any report to go to the Adobe PDF version of that report. Or, you can go to the [Research main page](#) to view these or other research reports currently available.

- The [***Enhancing Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Primary Health Care in Canada***](#) report finds growing evidence that, when individuals with differing knowledge, training, experience and attitudes find new ways of working together, the result is greater innovation, productivity and synergy. It also reveals that, despite the growing trend toward interdisciplinary collaboration, teamwork has not proven to be the 'easy fix' that was anticipated.
- The [***Barriers and Facilitators to Enhancing Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Primary Health Care***](#) report finds that funding, regulation, liability, electronic health records and health human resources issues can function as both barriers and facilitators to interdisciplinary collaboration. The authors suggest four policy alternatives for how to proceed with next steps, stressing the importance of confronting the difficult issues that arise with implementation directly and immediately.
- The [***Public Health and Social Context***](#) report focuses on the prevalence of chronic diseases, such as diabetes, obesity and mental illness, threatening the viability of the health system. Despite numerous reports dating back to 1974, Canada has yet to invest significantly in health promotion, prevention and the broad determinants of health to control health costs in the long run. This report examines the role of primary health care in addressing population health issues, from prevention and screening to targeted treatment programs at a disease and population-specific level.

On-line Surveys

There is still time to participate in the EICP on-line surveys for the public and primary health care professionals. The survey has been [extended until May 31, 2005](#), to ensure that we get as much information as possible about how individual patients and clients, along with the health professionals who care for them, are experiencing teamwork in primary health care.



Leaders' Forum 1

“And, if we are not able to make the kind of changes that are required, if we are not able by 2011 to provide 24/7 care in a multidisciplinary fashion to 50 per cent of our population—which is a goal the first ministers of this country have set for you and I and other health care providers in the country and other health ministers—then I think we would be doing less than we ought to do, and we would be less than successful.”

—Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh, Minister of Health, EICP Leaders' Forum (Ottawa, December 2003)

In December 2004, the EICP Initiative convened board members from its Steering Committee organizations in Ottawa for a progress report and dialogue about next steps for the Initiative. Leaders' Forum participants generated both heat and light when they talked about the status of interdisciplinary collaboration in Canada and some of its key challenges. While providing input from their professional perspectives, participants expressed enthusiasm and overall support for the EICP Initiative's efforts to raise the profile of interdisciplinary practice, especially when it could be linked to effective health care reforms for the future.

At the end of the day, participants focused on “next steps” and the need for more information and research. They delivered a strong message that a common lexicon or glossary of terms was required, so concepts were clear and well understood.

Leaders also called on provincial and territorial governments to offer their support.

Barrier/Enabling Factor Task Groups

Picking up where the Leaders' Forum left off, five task groups met in January 2005 to examine the key themes that dominate thinking about collaboration in primary health care. Experts, government officials and health care providers met for workshops on:

- [Liability/risk management](#)
- [Funding](#)
- [Electronic health records](#)
- [Regulatory factors](#)
- [Health human resources](#)

All of these issues offer both challenges and opportunities for health care providers and/or health systems that hope to practice or encourage more teamwork in primary health care. The task groups focused on what encourages, and what stands in the way of, collaboration and teamwork in primary health care.

The Initiative will soon publish reports from these meetings, but Steering Committee members have already relied on this input plus the Leaders' Forum 1 consultation, to inform their latest thinking about the EICP principles and framework.



What's Ahead?

- The EICP Steering Committee will be convening a **Leaders' Forum 2** on June 5 & 6, 2005, in Montreal that will involve leaders from many of Canada's national health and professional organizations. The EICP Principles and Framework elements will be the centerpiece of that gathering.
- EICP Chair John Service will address an invitational workshop about evaluating primary health care renewal, which will be hosted by the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation in Vancouver in April 2005.

Get Involved

All Canadians have a stake in this dialogue about primary health care transformation. You can provide your comments, complete an on-line survey or become more informed about the trends in interdisciplinary collaboration. Check out our web site at www.eicp-acis.ca.

For More Information

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