

Collaborative Action to Address Health Equity in Toronto Hospitals

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Abstract:

Toronto is Canada's largest city with a broadly defined diverse and aging population. There is strong evidence to suggest that there are barriers to equitable access to high quality health care, the specific needs of health-disadvantaged populations are not being met, and there are gaps in available services for these populations. In response, all 18 hospitals within the TCLHIN (Toronto's regional health authority) are now required to develop health equity (HE) plans and report on their progress annually.

Purpose:

Hospital HE plans were designed to yield what each member is doing to address health inequities. Each hospital had to answer questions of access, service gaps and challenges, priority setting and planning, promising practices, policies, procedures and standards, governance, targets and measurement, communications and roles of the TCLHIN. This session highlights the development of the HE partnership planning process, success factors and challenges, as well as covering central themes, concrete actions and results to date.

Results:

HE planning had impacts at multiple levels, including: changes in the conversation on HE at hospitals; increased accountability for HE; and a more robust engagement and investigation of what HE means at the organization and system level

The collaborative planning process resulted in:

- The creation of a CEO-level hospital network on health inequities
- The development, analysis and evaluation of formal HE Plans at hospitals
- Coordinated actions and initiatives now being taken
- Opportunities for system-level change and action on HE

Conclusions:

Analysis of overall hospital HE plans led to concrete ideas and actions for 'quick wins', as well as for medium and long-term system-level changes. HE is a shared responsibility that requires a systemic response to achieve change. Actions need to fit together and be anchored in a coherent regional equity strategy.

A strong health equity collaboration and partnership is now thriving at multiple levels amongst hospital and non-hospital partners representing nearly 85% of health care budgets for this region.