In Search of a Cure for Wait Lists

Friday, September 3, 2004 – The First Ministers meeting on health care reform will take place later this month in Ottawa and reducing waiting lists for essential medical procedures is everyone's stated priority. In the recent federal election it was prominent among the current government's election promises.

It is clear that Canadians are also anxious to see the problem resolved. A Statistics Canada report in July found that 29% of Canadians who received specialized care reported that they had to wait too long for it. They waited four times as long as those who said their waits were acceptable.

In an op-ed article in the *Globe and Mail*, CPRN President, Judith Maxwell welcomes the attention to waiting lists, while suggesting that the federal role in the issue is far from clear.

She reviews a number of initiatives across the country, as well as experience abroad, to conclude that while there is no perfect model, there is room for optimism. She draws certain lessons from her survey – the importance of local solutions, the fact that physicians have provided the impetus for change, and that each wait list management system needs to be tailored to the clinical problem in question.

The federal contribution in all this is harder to discern, apart from the important indirect role of ensuring that stable funding arrangements are in place, and the catalytic role of supporting research and knowledge transfer.

You can access or download a copy of her commentary ***Managing Wait Lists: Taming the Queue*** by clicking here.

For much more on the subject see Cathy Fooks' ***The Taming of the Queue: Wait Time Measurement, Monitoring and Management*** click here.

You will also find a number of related presentations on the same page as the Fooks paper. They come from a colloquium on wait times organized by CPRN on behalf of the Canadian Medical Association, the Institute of Health Services and Policy Research, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, and the Canadian Institute for Health Information.

Judith Maxwell Wins Planners' Award

The Canadian Institute of Planners, has awarded the *Plan Canada Article of the Year for 2004* to CPRN's President, Judith Maxwell, for a contribution to *Plan Canada*, titled, "Sustainable Cities".

According to the citation, her article was chosen, "for the large extent to which it serves the needs and interests of Plan Canada readers" and for "the fine writing style, clarity, depth of reporting, insight, imagination and analysis."

Congratulations from all of us, Judith!

e-network e-network work e-network e-net