

**MEDIA RELEASE: Attention Political and Health Reporters****Health Council of Canada shows importance of quality interactions with regular doctor in chronic disease care**

Toronto April 28, 2010 – For Canadians with chronic conditions, having a regular doctor doesn't necessarily mean they're receiving the safest or most supportive medical care. That doctor must also provide the basic elements of good primary care, two of which are: knowing their patient's history and helping to coordinate other aspects of their care, according to a Health Council of Canada bulletin released today.

"As the front line of chronic illness care, family doctors and other primary health care providers play a key role in helping these patients navigate the Canadian health care system," said John G. Abbott, CEO of the Health Council of Canada. "It's important for Canadians with chronic disease to know that the quality of their interactions with their doctor affects the quality of their care."

Beyond the Basics: The Importance of Patient-Provider Interactions in Chronic Illness Care, the third bulletin in the Canadian Health Care Matters series, is based on an analysis of data from the 2008 Commonwealth Fund International Health Policy Survey of Sicker Adults. All respondents had significant health issues. The Health Council of Canada focused on patients with at least one chronic condition and who have a regular doctor or place where they receive health care.

The bulletin also shows that, compared to sicker Canadians with a regular doctor, but without the basic elements of good care, people whose doctor knows their history and helps to coordinate their care were:

- More likely to get recommended routine tests to monitor their conditions, such as – for diabetes patients – checks of their blood pressure, cholesterol, foot health, and haemoglobin A1C level;
- More likely to get clear advice about symptoms to watch for;
- More likely to have all their medications reviewed by a doctor or pharmacist;
- Less likely to have experienced a medication or medical error; and
- More likely to rate their care as excellent.

"These findings help validate what we know about the importance of good primary care and reinforces the Health Council's strong support of primary health care teams and electronic health records as vital to chronic disease management," said Abbott.

The Health Council of Canada also hosts a discussion board called "Canada Values Health" at www.healthcouncilcanada.ca and encourages Canadian patients and doctors to share their experiences on this issue there.

Background

The Health Council of Canada, created by the 2003 *First Ministers' Accord on Health Care Renewal* is mandated to monitor and report on the progress of health care renewal in Canada. Councillors were appointed by the participating provinces, territories and the Government of Canada. To download the bulletin or view past reports, visit www.healthcouncilcanada.ca.

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