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BACKGROUND

Shining a light on progress in health care renewal: Regional success stories in reducing wait times

Stories on initiatives to improve access to care in the five targeted clinical areas appear throughout the Health Council of Canada's latest report on wait times, ***Wading through Wait Times: What Do Meaningful Reductions and Guarantees Mean?*** These examples illustrate that progress in health care renewal is happening and is possible when leadership, determination and resources combine to strengthen our health care system. Here's a quick guide, with page references, to these stories.

Cardiac care in Ontario: back to the future

For the Cardiac Care Network of Ontario, the future began 17 years ago. Today, thanks to electronic information and a system of regional care coordinators, patients referred for heart surgery in the province know how long they can safely wait for their procedure, when they can expect to be treated, and who to call if their condition changes. **See p. 5.**

Cancer care in Nova Scotia: wait times are one step in the continuum of care

Breast cancer rates are down in Nova Scotia, and early diagnosis and faster access to care are part of the story. The plot also involves mobile mammography units that reach women where they live, a central booking system, and attention to how the province's population is changing. **See p. 10.**

Hip and knee surgery in BC: connecting the health care dots

A focus on the interconnections in health care plays a major role in the success of Vancouver Coastal Health Region in reducing wait times for total joint replacement surgery to fix aging hips and knees. A pilot project in a community hospital, now standard practice, reduced wait times by 75% while also increasing the number of hip and knee replacements by 136%. **See p. 17.**

Diagnostic imaging in Saskatchewan: learning from success in surgery

The first of its kind in Canada, Saskatchewan's Diagnostic Imaging Network is helping everyone "sing from the same song sheet," and wait times for tests like MRI and CT scans have declined. Saving money for health regions through bulk purchases of expensive imagining machines is also worth singing about. **See p. 25.**

Cataract surgery in Ontario: a vision for change

In less than two years and despite increasing demand, Ontario has managed to cut wait times for cataract surgery in half. Today, nine out of 10 cases are done within the 26-week benchmark. Incentives to hospitals to increase volumes of service, the creation of dedicated sites for low-risk surgeries, and changes in how people work contributed to this success. **See p. 28.**

The full report, ***Wading through Wait Times: What Do Meaningful Reductions and Guarantees Mean?***, can be downloaded at: www.healthcouncilcanada.ca.

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