

## Reducing unnecessary care: Remarkable progress being made

### New report profiles Choosing Wisely initiatives in Ontario

A new report by Health Quality Ontario highlights the significant efforts underway to implement recommendations from the Choosing Wisely Canada initiative to reduce unnecessary care for patients. The report complements a national report just released by Choosing Wisely Canada and the Canadian Institute of Health Information *Unnecessary Care in Canada* which documents the extent of unnecessary care associated with eight selected tests, treatments and procedures.

Health care quality is defined as a health system that is safe, effective, patient centred, timely, efficient, and equitable and the Choosing Wisely Canada campaign clearly supports these goals. Choosing Wisely Canada is a national, clinician-led campaign launched in 2014 to help patients and clinicians engage in conversations about unnecessary care. These conversations are supported by more than 215 recommendations from medical society specialties aimed at reducing unnecessary care and harm for patients.

For the past two years, researchers in Ontario have been working with Health Quality Ontario and Choosing Wisely Canada to measure how often care is being delivered that is acknowledged to not be beneficial or where the risks outweigh the benefits.

This work has shown almost a third of surgical patients in Ontario receiving potentially unnecessary tests before low-risk, non-cardiac surgery and there being a 30-fold variation in the ordering of these tests and bloodwork between different hospitals. Such unnecessary care is not confined to hospitals. The report also notes that in primary care, 21% of Ontarians had bone mineral density testing not covered by practice guidelines.

The Health Quality Ontario report [\*“Spotlight on Leaders of Change: Implementing Choosing Wisely Canada recommendations in Ontario to Improve Quality of Care”\*](#) outlines the successful programs implemented by clinical leaders to address unnecessary care in hospital, primary and long-term care settings.

In the hospital sector, Health Quality Ontario produces [a report](#) based on data from the Institute of Clinical Evaluative Sciences, providing hospitals with comparative provincial data and ideas for quality improvement in select topic areas such as pre-operative electrocardiography and chest radiography for low-risk surgery groups.

In another example, Dr. Christine Soong from Mount Sinai Hospital, Toronto describes how that hospital has been able to reduce the monthly proportion of in-patients being newly prescribed sedative hypnotic–drugs for sleep in the medicine and cardiology units by more than 40% in one year.

In long-term care, a number of organizations partnered to create programs such as the appropriate prescribing demonstration project to provide ideas and tools for clinicians to develop quality improvement initiatives related to their prescribing practices. According to Dr. Sid Feldman, co-chair of the project at Baycrest Health Sciences, this project “is helping change practice in ways that should improve quality of life for residents living in long-term care homes in Ontario.”

Primary care is also seeing the impact of work to implement Choosing Wisely Canada recommendations. Dr. Kimberly Wintermute from the North York Family Health Team describes how her team has reduced or eliminated unnecessary use of proton pump inhibitors among 60% of patients engaged over an 18-month period.

In another major, province-wide program, the Ontario College of Family Physicians has developed a continuing professional development program – *Practicing Wisely* - to enable family doctors to implement Choosing Wisely Canada recommendations across multiple clinical areas.

“We would like to congratulate all sectors for embracing the Choosing Wisely Canada initiative as a dimension of improving quality care in Ontario and throughout the country,” said Lee Fairclough, vice-president of quality improvement at Health Quality Ontario.

“In the coming months we will be working closely with Choosing Wisely Canada as well as provincial partner organizations and patients to guide the formation of a regional Ontario Choosing Wisely affiliate to continue advancing this work. In the meantime, I would urge everyone committed reducing unnecessary care to read about the inspiring work already underway in the province.”