

MEDIA RELEASE

New report reveals inequities in people's health risks, care and outcomes based on their income

Toronto, ON – April 20, 2016 – According to a new report by Health Quality Ontario, the provincial advisor on the quality of health care, the poorer people are in Ontario, the more likely they are to have shorter lifespans, to be overdue for screening tests, and to suffer from multiple chronic conditions.

“Poor people in Ontario pay for their lower income with their health,” says Dr. Joshua Tepper, president and CEO of Health Quality Ontario. “This report not only highlights the data, but also the experiences of people in Ontario facing income-related health inequities. Ultimately, our report aims to help break down the barriers to better quality health care and improve outcomes.”

Health equity is one of the six dimensions of health quality and is defined as the ability of all individuals to reach their full health potential and receive high quality care, no matter where they live or who they are.

Health equity has also been identified as a provincial priority in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's *Patients First: A Proposal to Strengthen Patient-Centred Care in Ontario*, a discussion paper that outlines ways the province can reduce gaps and strengthen patient-centred care.

The Health Quality Ontario health equity report, entitled *Income and Health: Opportunities for health equity in Ontario*, provides the public with a comprehensive review of how the income of people in Ontario is associated with their health, the health care they receive, and their health outcomes.

A few of the gaps highlighted in the report include:

- The poorest one-fifth of people in Ontario are nearly twice as likely as the richest one-fifth of people to have two or more chronic conditions (such as having diabetes and a mental illness).
- About six out of 10 of the poorest people in Ontario have prescription medication insurance, compared with nearly nine out of 10 of the richest people.
- People living in the poorest urban neighbourhoods in Ontario are less likely to receive recommended screening tests that are considered part of high-quality primary care. For example, half of the people living in the poorest urban neighbourhoods in Ontario are overdue for colorectal cancer screening (a customary form of cancer screening for all people in Ontario over 50), compared with just over one-third of the people in the richest urban neighbourhoods.
- Men living in the poorest neighbourhoods in Ontario die, on average, more than four years earlier than the richest men, while women living in the poorest neighbourhoods in the province die an average of two years earlier than women in the richest areas.

In the report, stories from people across Ontario who are facing challenges with their health and their income bring the data to life. Jean is supposed to be taking four medications to treat or manage her asthma, allergies, stomach problems and depression, but can't afford any of them. George struggles to afford nutritious food. And Jennifer runs up debt on her credit card to pay for psychotherapy sessions to work through traumas she experienced as a child and as a young adult.

Equity in health care is recognized as a key priority in jurisdictions across Canada, with the Canadian Institute for Health Information recently releasing a report on health inequities by income. The Health Quality Ontario report on health equity shares Ontario-specific data on equity, providing context and establishing a measurement framework for ongoing reporting on progress toward reducing inequities in health and health care across different groups of people in Ontario.

"Your income should not determine how healthy you are, or the quality of care you receive, but according to our findings in *Income and Health: Opportunities for health equity in Ontario*, this is a reality for many people living in Ontario," says Dr. Jeffrey Turnbull, Clinical Chief at Health Quality Ontario who is working with experts from across the system and patients with lived experience on a Health Quality Ontario health equity plan to help the system improve health quality for all Ontarians.

To access the full report, visit www.hqontario.ca
Infographic: [How Income Affects Health in Ontario](#)

About Health Quality Ontario

Health Quality Ontario (HQP) is the provincial advisor on quality in health care. HQO reports to the public on the quality of the health care system, evaluates the effectiveness of new health care technologies and services, and supports quality improvement throughout the system. Visit www.hqontario.ca for more information.

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