

It's All About Access!

Leadership Summit

Why is this summit being held?

- *To develop the individual and collective capacity for effective leadership and strategic advocacy of audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech-language pathologists.*
- *To build momentum to advance access to primary health care services from audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech-language pathologists by the residents of Canada.*
- *To develop a collective strategy and momentum for change for our four professions.*

Shared Vision

All residents of Canada, irrespective of finances, social, culture or geographic considerations, should have access to the services they require from audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and speech-language pathologists.

Summit Proposed Outcomes

Individuals from the four professions will develop or enhance their skills in leadership through advocacy, negotiations and media relations training. They will work strategically in partnership to:

1. Advocate for the integration of audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and speech-language pathologists within interprofessional primary health care models to increase the access to these services by the residents of Canada.
2. Promote the integral role of these professions in primary health care.
3. Advocate for funding models that allow these health professionals to practice according to the principles of primary health care and interprofessional collaboration.
4. Work with coalitions to participate in advocacy initiatives related to interprofessional collaboration strategies or programs.
5. Promote profession specific and interprofessional research studies that expand the knowledge base for interprofessional collaboration in primary health care in Canada.
6. Lead the development of change management resources and strategies to encourage the transition to collaborative interprofessional practice in primary health care services.
7. Create provincial/territorial/regional advocacy strategies.

8. Create interprofessional strategic advocacy networks.

Background Issues:

1. Public Policy Context

Canada lacks a national primary health care framework with equitable funding mechanisms for primary health care professions. Canada's universal health insurance system was first implemented to provide hospital care and later was expanded to cover physician fees. As a result, public funding now covers almost all physician services, but less than half of the costs of services provided by other health professionals. Under the Canada Health Act, audiology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and speech-language pathology services are covered in hospitals (where services exist). Under special circumstances, provincial or regional programs may fund primary health care services. At present, primary care services in Canada are delivered chiefly by medical practitioners who focus on the diagnosis and treatment of illness and injury.

2. Roles and Relationships among Primary Health Professionals

Defining roles and relationships among numerous practitioners in primary health care has been noted as one of the most significant and persistent challenges in creating a primary health care approach. These roles and relationships are affected by many factors, including:

- The predominant focus of the health care system on hospital and medical care and the consequent lack of value placed on chronic disease management, health promotion, illness and injury prevention.
- The lack of effective systems for transmitting health information to support continuity of services for consumers.
- Health care funding models focus on fee-for-service reimbursement for physicians and reward acute episodic care rather than continuing care and health promotion and disease prevention (EICP, 2006).
- Evidence is emerging about the economic value of alternative models of primary health care delivery involving interprofessional teams.

Proactive professional, interprofessional and consumer advocacy is required to inform federal and provincial public policy reform to eliminate these barriers that prevent the people of Canada access to needed health services.

3. Mandate for the Four Professions

1. Audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech-language pathologists inform the public, other health professions and policy decision-makers about their role in promoting health, well-being and quality of life.
2. Audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech-language pathologists advocate for access to their services in primary health care for individuals, groups and communities.

3. Audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech-language pathologists work in partnership with relevant organizations and stakeholders in advocacy efforts to promote access of the people of Canada to their services in primary health care.
4. Audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech-language pathologists advocate for the appropriate allocation of human, financial and material resources to provide quality services.
5. Audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech-language pathologists promote the development of research among stakeholders that will advance best practices in primary health care.
6. Audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech-language pathologists engage in change management processes to facilitate the transition to collaborative interprofessional practice in primary health care services.

The Professions

Audiologists

Audiologists are professionals who have a minimum of a Master's degree and are regulated in six Canadian provinces. An audiologist is a professional who identifies, diagnoses (restricted in some provinces), treats, and manages individuals with peripheral and central hearing loss or balance problems. Some audiologists dispense and fit hearing aids as part of a comprehensive aural rehabilitative program. Audiology services are integral to a number of comprehensive interdisciplinary assessment/treatment programs. Audiologists are also involved in prevention and research for hearing disorders.

Occupational Therapists

Occupational therapists are graduates of accredited graduate level university programs in Canada and are regulated professionals in all 10 provinces. Occupational therapists have expertise in the area of occupational performance. Occupation refers to the activities of daily life that have value and meaning to the individual. These include self-care, paid or volunteer work, and leisure. Occupational therapists use collaborative and partnership approaches with clients to promote participation and engagement in their important activities. Clients may be individuals of all ages and varying abilities and have occupational performance issues arising from medical conditions, transitional difficulties or environmental barriers. Clients may also be organizations that influence the occupational performance of particular groups or populations. Services are planned and designed in collaboration with clients to meet identified goals within specific environments such as home, school and the workplace.

Physiotherapists

Physiotherapists are primary care, autonomous, client-focused health professionals dedicated to: improving and maintaining functional independence and physical performance; preventing and managing pain, physical impairments, disabilities and limits to participation; and promoting fitness, health and wellness. Physiotherapists are educated in graduate level university programs located in 14 universities across the country and are self regulated in all

provinces and one territory. Physiotherapists, as members of interprofessional health teams, play an active role in primary health care service models that focus on health promotion, disease prevention and the improvement and/or maintenance of the mobility and function of the residents of Canada.

Speech-Language Pathologists

Speech-language pathologists are professionals who have a minimum of a Master's degree and are regulated in six Canadian provinces. The role of the S-LP is to identify, assess, evaluate, treat, manage, educate and help to prevent language, speech, voice, fluency, cognitive, and other related communication disorders, as well as swallowing problems. These difficulties may be caused by a variety of health problems. For example strokes, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, ALS, genetic disorders such as cleft palate, hearing loss, learning disabilities, delayed development.