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MEMORANDUM TO: Relevant Stakeholders in Pathology, Colonoscopy and Mammography

FROM: Susan Fitzpatrick
Assistant Deputy Minister
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SUBJECT: Cancer Care Ontario and College of Physician & Surgeons joint quality management partnership

Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care directs a broad quality agenda focused on continuous improvement across all parts of the health care system. An important enabler to improvement has been demonstrated by comprehensive and system-wide quality management programs to support consistent best practices, appropriate care and optimal patient outcomes across areas of care.

In support of this, the Ministry has asked Cancer Care Ontario (CCO) and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) to jointly develop a provincial quality management program in three areas: mammography, colonoscopy and pathology. In these particular areas there is widespread agreement on the immediacy to address variability and gaps and ensure: (i) consistent, clinically-driven standards across the province; (ii) adequate supports, linkages and programs to promote adherence to those standards; and, (iii) system-wide reporting and measurement at all levels of care delivery. Mammography, colonoscopy and pathology share a foundation of substantial quality management activity already in the field from which to build on so it makes sense to focus on these three initially.

Elements of a comprehensive quality management program include:

1. A quality framework that sets out an integrated set of performance standards and quality measures at the provider, facility and system levels
2. An integrated data gathering infrastructure, reporting linked to quality improvement opportunities and rigorous health analytics to review data
3. Organized, peer-led approaches to performance improvement
4. Quality assurance processes – provider and site

The Ministry recognizes the interests and accountabilities that many groups, organizations and agencies have in these three areas. What is needed is to bring the shared intent and many good efforts already in place together into a single coherent provincial quality management program for each. This program will support other accountability structures already in the system with a particular focus on the clinical aspects of high quality care. The Ministry has asked two leadership organizations – CCO, given its leadership in continuous system quality improvement, and CPSO, given its leadership in quality assurance in physician practice as well as out-of-hospital premises and independent health facilities - to take lead responsibility to bring these programs together. CCO and CPSO will be accountable to plan and develop a program through extensive consultation and meaningful collaboration with clinical experts, other system partners and all other relevant stakeholders. The program's future success will depend, in part, on the degree of collaboration and integration that this initiative is able to foster.

Others including the Quality Management Program – Laboratory Services (under the Ontario Medical Association), the Ontario Hospital Association, various physician specialty organizations (e.g. the Path2Quality program), Health Quality Ontario and other provider groups and their regulatory organizations, will play a meaningful role in advising on the design and implementation of these total quality management programs, as well as helping to deliver aspects of the programs where appropriate. CCO and CPSO will be expected to fully access, coordinate and use the clinical and operational leadership and capacity already in the system.

This is a new approach in Ontario, built on success elsewhere, and we believe it can succeed here if it is planned in a spirit of open collaboration and a shared intent to 'get it right'. The first step will be a provincial consultation led by CCO and CPSO to inform program design. Consultations will begin early in the 2013/14 fiscal year.


Susan Fitzpatrick