

**CARP Health Care Update Report
October 5, 2012**

Key Findings

Since this benchmark poll was first taken in June 2011, there have been decreases in the proportion who have waited for appointments or treatments, and decreases in perceptions of long wait times. At the same time, there have been significant increases in the use of electronic health records.

Almost all CARP members agree, and the majority “strongly”, that health care providers should be required by law to meet certain service benchmarks, and those who fail to meet them should face pay/funding cuts, license suspension or fines.

Not only have many members had to wait for treatment, many also believe wait times are getting longer. However, there are positive indicators since last year that perceptions and experience of long wait times have decreased,

Members are in favour of national drug purchasing and coverage strategies as the best way to bring down the cost of drugs. Use of electronic health records appears to be very common among CARP members’ doctors and has increased significantly since last year.

Teletriage, or telephone medical advisory, is very successful and widely used among CARP members. Health innovation in Canada is very important to CARP members, and they think Canada is a player in this field.

The best way to enhance the caregiver-patient experience is to fund more home care and caregiver income support, according to members. A significant minority of members say communications between themselves and their family doctors could use improvement.

In general, the wide majority of members find their interactions with the health care system to be satisfactory.

Slip and fall injuries and incapacitation among our members are fairly common, and are overwhelmingly a female phenomenon.

The vast majority of members believe Personal Services Workers (PSWs) should be regulated by the government.

A significant minority of members find it difficult to navigate the health care system, relying on themselves or their family doctor to assist them, and many would like to see this burden shifted to their doctor or to a community care worker.

One third of members have had difficulty finding a family doctor after they had moved or their previous doctor retired, and they are most likely to see the answer to this problem as training more family doctors.

There is unanimous support for CARP's "One Patient" seamless continuum of care concept of patient-centred health care, and the aspects of this concept most valued are integrated health teams, a 'clear pathway to care' and wider use of electronic health records..

The Conservative Party has regained some lost ground at the expense of the NDP, and the Liberals have increased their share of voter preference slightly.

HEALTH CARE BENCHMARKS/SANCTIONS

CARP originally took this poll in June, 2011. We took it again in September, 2012, as a way of gauging progress against the benchmarks this poll established.

There is almost universal agreement that health care providers should be legally required to meet benchmarks of service (91%), and more than half of our members agree “strongly”.

How much do you agree health care providers should be required by law to meet certain service benchmarks or suffer sanctions?

	June 2011	September 2012
AGREE	91%	91%
Agree strongly	54%	53%
Agree	37%	38%
DISAGREE	6%	6%
Disagree	5%	5%
Disagree strongly	1%	1%
DON'T KNOW	3%	4%

The most important benchmark to meet, by a factor of two, is guarantees for wait times for treatment (27%), followed in distant second place by preventative strategies (13%), wait times guarantees to see specialists (11%) and positive patient outcomes (15%).

Which of the following benchmarks do you think would do the most to improve health care and cut costs?

	June 2011	September 2012
Wait times guarantees treatment	29%	27%
Using preventative strategies	13%	13%
Wait times guarantees specialists	13%	11%
Positive patient outcomes	12%	15%
Wait times guarantees for ER	7%	6%
Patient satisfaction with providers	7%	7%
Managing chronic disease	7%	8%
Positive health indicators population	6%	5%
Wait times guarantees home care	3%	4%
OTHER	5%	5%

Funding or pay cuts (27%) or license suspension (21%) are seen as the most appropriate sanctions for not meeting benchmarks, followed by fines (12%). Relatively few opt for termination or closure (6%).

Which one kind of sanction do you think is appropriate for those health care providers who don't meet service benchmarks?

	June 2011	September 2012
Cut in pay/funding	27%	27%
License suspension	21%	21%
Fines	14%	12%
Termination/closure	5%	6%
Loss of hours/shifts	3%	2%
OTHER	8%	7%
NO SANCTIONS NECESSARY	8%	8%
DON'T KNOW	15%	16%

Wait Times

Not only have many members had to wait for treatment, many also believe wait times are getting longer.

Fully three quarters of members have had to wait for treatment or tests in the past (77%), the plurality "more than once" (42%). In total, 4-in-10 say they didn't have to wait "too long" (42%), while a quarter say their wait was excessive ("too long" - 24%). One tenth of members in total have had to wait "much too long" (11%). The proportion which waited "too long" has fallen in the past year, while the proportion waiting "not too long" has risen, which may be a positive indicator.

Have you had to wait for a diagnostic test, medical procedure or surgery?

	June 2011	September 2012
NO	25%	23%
TOTAL YES	75%	77%
TOTAL ONCE ONLY	31%	35%
TOTAL MORE THAN ONCE	44%	42%
TOTAL NOT TOO LONG	38%	42%
TOTAL TOO LONG	37%	24%
TOTAL MUCH TOO LONG	12%	11%

About one tenth of members have had to repeat a test because the original report was lost or delayed (13%).

Have you ever had a diagnostic test repeated because the original report was lost or delayed?

	June 2011	September 2012
Yes	13%	13%
No	87%	87%

Members believe wait times have increased (38%) rather than decreased (13%) for a margin in favour of increase of 25 points. The proportion saying “gotten longer” has decreased since last year, another positive indicator.

As far as you know, have wait times for diagnostic tests, medical procedures and surgery gotten longer or shorter in the past 5 years?

	June 2011	September 2012
Gotten longer	42%	38%
Have not changed	23%	24%
Gotten shorter	13%	13%
MARGIN IN FAVOUR OF “LONGER”	+29	+25
DON'T KNOW	22%	25%

Pharmaceuticals Management

Members are in favour of national drug purchasing and coverage strategies as the best way to bring down the cost of drugs.

About one tenth of members have skipped a prescription because of cost (12%).

Have you ever skipped a prescription because of cost?

	June 2011	September 2012
Yes	14%	12%
No	84%	86%
PREFER NOT TO SAY	2%	2%

On average, members are taking 3.3 prescription medications, although one quarter are taking five or more (24%).

How many prescription medications do you take currently?

	June 2011	September 2012
None	12%	13%
One	16%	15%
Two	16%	17%
Three	18%	16%
Four	14%	15%
Five or more	24%	24%
AVERAGE NUMBER	3.3	3.3
PREFER NOT TO SAY	1%	1%

Members opt for ‘hard’, funded solutions to the cost of drugs, not ‘soft’ solutions like electronic prescribing or new patent laws. The two most popular strategies for reducing drug costs are using national bulk purchase (36%) and making it easier to replace brand name drugs with generics (17%). The proportion favouring bulk purchase has increased since last year..

Which of the following do you think would have the most effect on bringing down the cost of prescription drugs?

	June 2011	September 2012
National bulk drug purchase	27%	36%
Replace brand-names with generics	20%	17%
National pharmacare coverage	18%	13%
National formulary	12%	13%
Vet trade agreements	5%	5%
Independent evaluation	5%	5%
New drugs must perform better	4%	3%
More electronic/digital prescriptions	2%	2%
OTHER	2%	2%
DON'T KNOW	6%	6%

Electronic Health Records

Use of electronic health records appears to be very common among CARP members' doctors.

Two thirds of our members say their doctor uses electronic health records (65%), and, of those, half say this record contains all their medical information (54%). Both these findings represent significant increases since last year.

Does your family doctor or primary physician use electronic health records/Do these health records contain all your lab tests, specialists' reports and your personal chart?

	June 2011	September 2012
No	25%	21%
DON'T KNOW	15%	13%
Yes	58%	65%
All tests, records and charts	35%	54%
No, do not contain all tests	2%	3%
DON'T KNOW	21%	28%
NO FAMILY DOCTOR	2%	1%

Members are very open about the distribution of their electronic medical record, and the majority say it should be available to anyone they nominate (51%).

Who should be able to have access to your electronic health record?

	June 2011	September 2012
Family doctor, anyone I nominate	54%	51%
Family doctor, me, specialist	36%	37%
Family doctor, me, labs/hospitals	5%	6%
Family doctor and me only	4%	5%
Family doctor only	1%	1%
DON'T KNOW	1%	1%

There is wide agreement that electronic health records are more common now than they were five years ago (78%), and no one believes they are less common.

As far as you know, are electronic health records more common or less common now than they were 5 year ago?

	June 2011	September 2012
More common	76%	78%
No difference	8%	6%
Less common	*	*
MARGIN IN FAVOUR OF “MORE”	+76	+78
DON'T KNOW	16%	16%

Teletriage

Teletriage, or telephone medical advisory, is very successful and widely used among CARP members.

Close to one half our members know the 24 hour health hot line in their province (44%) and a third have used it (33%).

Do you know the 24 hour health information hotline in your province/Have you ever called a 24 hour health information line?

	June 2011	September 2012
No	50%	51%
Just use 911	5%	5%
Yes	45%	44%
Have called	31%	33%
Have not called	14%	11%

The vast majority of those who called a 24 hour hot line spoke to a nurse (93%) and were satisfied with the outcome (79%).

Were you satisfied with the information you got from this line?

	June 2011	September 2012
YES	81%	79%
Yes, spoke to a nurse	78%%	78%%
Yes, spoke to a doctor	2%%	1%%
NO	19%	21%
No, spoke to a nurse	13%	15%
No, spoke to a computer	*	*
No, no one answered	*	*
NO, (OTHER)	4%	5%
TOTAL SPOKE TO A NURSE	91%	93%

Health Innovation

Health innovation in Canada is very important to CARP members, and they think Canada is a player in this field.

Two thirds of members think it is “extremely/very” important that Canada invests in the latest medical technology, regardless of the cost (66%), and a further one quarter think it “important” (27%) for a total importance score of 93%.

How important do you think it is that Canada invests in developing the most up-to-date medical technologies, treatments and equipment, regardless of the cost?

	June 2011	September 2012
EXTREMELY/VERY IMPORTANT	68%	66%
Extremely important	35%	33%
Very important	33%	33%
Important	26%	27%
NOT IMPORTANT	5%	6%
Not very important	4%	5%
Not at all important	1%	1%
DON'T KNOW	1%	1%

Overall, more than half of members think Canada is a leader in medical innovation or is trying to get there (56%), while about one fifth disagree (21%).

As far as you know, is Canada a leader in medical innovation?

	June 2011	September 2012
YES	58%	56%
Yes, but not as much as in the past	24%	26%
Yes, becoming one	21%	18%
Yes, always has been	13%	12%
NO	19%	21%
No, never has been	9%	9%
No, used to be but not now	6%	7%
No, trying to become one	4%	5%
DON'T KNOW	22%	23%

ENHANCING THE CAREGIVER/PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

When asked how to enhance the caregiver-patient relationship, members focus, once again, on 'hard' funded solutions rather than 'soft' communications strategies, and one quarter say the most important enhancement is more government funding for home care (29%) followed by income support for caregivers (12%) and more trained PSWs, or Personal Services Workers (15%). Training and respite for family caregivers are also seen as important (9% and 11%).

As far as you know, what would be the best way to enhance the caregiver-patient experience?

	June 2011	September 2012
More funding for home care	26%	29%
More income support for caregivers	16%	12%
More trained PSWs	13%	15%
More training for family caregivers	10%	9%
Respite care services for caregivers	9%	11%
More adult day programs	5%	7%
Access to caregiver hotline/clinic	4%	5%
OTHER	2%	1%
DON'T KNOW	11%	10%

Members have sought care from the health care system on average 3.8 times in the past year; although close to one fifth have experienced care seven times or more (17%).

How many times have you used the health care system in the past year?

	June 2011	September 2012
Once or twice	31%	32%
Three or four times	30%	30%
Five or six times	14%	15%
Seven times or more	18%	17%
AVERAGE NUMBER OF TIMES	3.7	3.8
HAVEN'T USED IN PAST YEAR	7%	6%

The most recent care episode is most likely a doctor visit (60%), followed by a lab test (21%) or a hospital visit (9%).

What type of care was the most recent you received in the past year?

	June 2011	September 2012
Doctor visit	61%	60%
Diagnostic tests/lab	20%	21%
Hospital stay	10%	9%
Rehab	1%	2%
Home care	1%	1%
OTHER	2%	2%
RECEIVED NO CARE PAST YEAR	5%	4%

One fifth of members believe that their communications with their family doctor could be improved (19%), while about half this proportion believe that communications between doctor and hospital could be improved (13%). One third of members think no improvements in communication are needed (35%).

Which ONE area of communications in your health care needs to be improved the most?

	June 2011	September 2012
Between me and family doctor	19%	19%
Between hospital and family doctor	13%	13%
Between labs and family doctor	8%	6%
Between home care and doctor	5%	7%
Between caregivers and providers	5%	6%
OTHER	15%	15%
NO IMPROVEMENT NEEDED	35%	35%

Close to three quarters of members say their past year experiences with the health care system were satisfactory (72%) and one fifth describe their experiences as very satisfactory (19%). Somewhat fewer see it as time consuming (13%). General long waits are characteristic of about one tenth (7%).

Which of the following describes your experience with the health care system in the past year?

	June 2011	September 2012
SATISFACTORY	71%	72%
Very satisfactory	19%	19%
Generally satisfactory	52%	53%
Time consuming, not difficult	8%	6%
Difficult and time consuming	7%	7%
Waited too long	7%	7%
No communication with providers	2%	3%
Had to tell story over and over again	2%	2%
I was not involved in decisions	2%	1%
Information is not available	1%	1%
OTHER	1%	2%

SLIP AND FALL

Four-in-ten members have had someone in the family suffer incapacitation from a slip and fall (42%), and the vast majority are women (27%) rather than male (10%). The victim is more likely to be a parent (16%) than a spouse (8%) or the respondent (13%).

Has anyone in your family been incapacitated by a slip and fall in the home or elsewhere?

	June 2011	September 2012
NO	61%	58%
TOTAL YES	39%	42%
TOTAL FEMALE	26%	27%
TOTAL MALE	9%	10%
TOTAL RESPONDENT	12%	13%
TOTAL SPOUSE	7%	8%
TOTAL PARENT	16%	16%

PERSONAL SERVICES WORKERS (PSWs)

The large majority of members believe PSWs should be regulated by the government (78%), whether they are organized (40%) or not (38%). Just one tenth believe they should be self-regulated (13%), and almost no one thinks regulation is unnecessary (3%). The proportion in favour of a union has increased since last year, while the group against organizing has shrunk.

Currently, personal services workers (PSWs), who provide home care, are unregulated and unorganized in Canada. How do you think PSWs should be regulated in Canada?

	June 2011	September 2012
TOTAL GOVERNMENT REGULATED	81%	78%
No union/association, govt reg	45%	38%
Union/association, govt reg	36%	40%
Union/association, self regulated	10%	13%
NO REGULATION NECESSARY	3%	3%
OTHER	2%	2%
DON'T KNOW	4%	4%

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM 'NAVIGATOR'

Four-in-ten members describe navigating the health care system as difficult (41%), about one tenth saying it is extremely difficult (8%). One third say this is time-consuming, but not difficult (32%), whereas about one tenth describe their experiences as neither difficult or time consuming (12%).

How difficult do you find it to navigate the bureaucracy of the health care system in your province?

	June 2011	September 2012
DIFFICULT	42%	41%
Extremely difficult	9%	8%
Very difficult	13%	12%
Difficult	20%	21%
TIME CONSUMING, NOT DIFFICULT	31%	32%
Time consuming, not very difficult	26%	27%
Time consuming, not at all difficult	5%	5%
NOT DIFFICULT/TIME CONSUMING	12%	12%
Not very difficult/time consuming	9%	9%
Not at all difficult/time consuming	3%	3%
OTHER	1%	
DON'T KNOW	15%	15%

When asked who they would consult on home care and long term care, members focus on their family doctor (56%), followed by a community care worker (15%) or a specialist (9%).

If a loved one or family member were stricken with a serious illness, such as stroke, cancer or heart disease, who would you turn to for primary advice on home care and long term care decisions?

	June 2011	September 2012
Family doctor	57%	56%
Community care worker	13%	15%
Specialist	12%	9%
Hospital	6%	6%
Family/friend	3%	3%
Nurse practitioner	3%	2%
Social assistance	1%	2%
Commercial home care provider	1%	1%
OTHER	1%	1%
DON'T KNOW	5%	5%

The majority of members say they navigate the health care system on their own now (58%), but just one fifth say this should be the case (21%). About one quarter rely on their family doctor for this now (26%), but twice as many would like to see this become the case (40%). There is interest in either a community care worker (12%) or a provincially appointed 'navigator' (8%) handling this task in the future.

Who helps you navigate your way through the health care system/Who SHOULD be helping you navigate your way through the health care system?

	Who Helps	Who Should
Just me	58%	21%
Family doctor	26%	40%
Other family member	10%	5%
Nurse practitioner	1%	9%
Friend/neighbour	1%	*
Community care worker	2%	12%
Family caregiver	1%	3%
Home care services	*	1%
Provincially appointed 'navigator'	*	7%
OTHER	1%	3%

FINDING A FAMILY DOCTOR

One third of members have had difficulty finding a family doctor (35%), most of them when an existing doctor retired or they moved and couldn't find a new one (21%). Among those who said no to this question, one quarter in total (23%) never moved or had a doctor retire, while one fifth in total found a new doctor without trouble (21%). About one tenth transferred to the doctor who took over the transitioned practice (12%).

Have you, or has anyone in your family had difficulty finding a new family doctor when moving to a new area or when an old doctor retired?

	June 2011	September 2012
NO	64%	64%
No, doctor has not retired/moved	27%	23%
No, found another doctor	19%	21%
No, previous doctor transferred	12%	12%
No (OTHER)	7%	8%
YES	35%	35%
Yes, couldn't find new doctor	21%	21%
Yes, new doctor wouldn't take me	2%	2%
Yes (OTHER)	12%	12%
NO FAMILY DOCTOR	1%	1%

The plurality of members have a simple message for the doctor crisis among seniors - just train more family doctors (31%), while just fewer call for nurses to be given more doctors' responsibilities (30%). Very few agree with financial incentives (4%), legal sanctions (3%) or sensitivity training for MDs (2%). The proportion suggesting training new family doctors has decreased while those calling for more geriatricians have increased.

Many seniors have difficulty finding new family doctors when their previous doctors retire or when they move. What one solution do you think would best alleviate this situation?

	June 2011	September 2012
Just train more family doctors	42%	31%
Nurses to take over doctors' duties	29%	30%
Train more geriatric specialists	9%	13%
More training in med school	8%	13%
Financial incentives	3%	4%
Legal sanctions	2%	3%
Sensitivity training in med school	1%	2%
OTHER	3%	2%
DON'T KNOW	3%	4%

Virtually all members agree CARP's plan for health reform is the correct course for the government (95%), and more than half take the strongest position (agree strongly - 59%).

CARP has advocated for a health care system based on patient-centred care in a seamless continuum of care from initial diagnosis through treatment to end-of-life care. All medical personnel communicate with each other, unnecessary tests and referrals are avoided and the pathway to care is clear to the patient. How much do you agree this should form the basis of provincial health care reforms?

AGREE	95%
Agree strongly	59%
Agree	36%
DISAGREE	2%
Disagree	1
Disagree strongly	1
DON'T KNOW	4

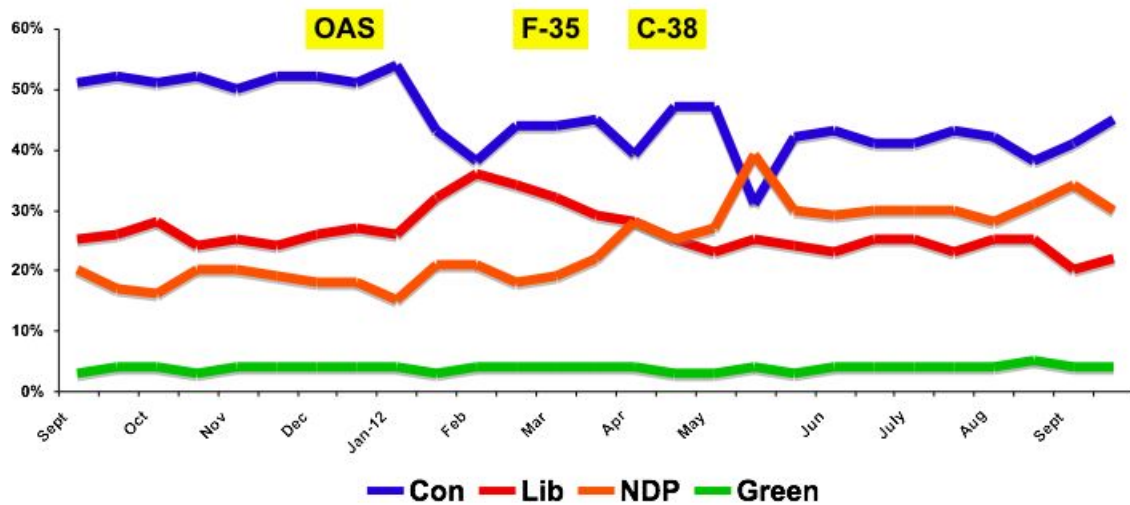
Health teams are seen to be the most valuable aspect of this vision of care (31%), followed by a clear pathway to care (26%). Electronic health records are also seen to be important (17%).

Which aspect of this vision of patient-centred care do you think would make the most positive difference to you if you were a patient?

Health teams	31%
Clear pathway to care	26%
Electronic health records	17%
System “navigator”	9%
Communication between providers and family	6%
Palliative/end-of-life care	3%
Central waiting list /health literacy	*
OTHER	1%
DON'T KNOW	6%

Electoral Preference

The Conservatives have been regaining their mojo among our members in the last two waves of polling and are now approaching their traditional one half support (45%). The NDP has taken a corresponding dip to 30% from 34% while the Liberals are up 2 points to 22%.



More than 2000 CARP Poll™ panel members responded to this poll between June 10 and 13. The margin of error for a probability sample this size is plus or minus 2.2%, 19 times out of 20. That is, if you asked all members of the CARP Poll™ panel the identical questions, their responses would be within 2%, either up or down, of the results shown here, 95% of the time