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| Improving Governance in Ontario Health Teams | August 15, 2022 |
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**Authors:**

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| Mausam Vadakkayil (mvadakka@uwo.ca), Atharv Joshi (ajoshi52@uwo.ca), Tysanth Kumar (tkumar24@uwo.ca) & Dr. Shannon Sibbald (ssibbald@uwo.ca) |
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**Issue:**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Health systems with well-organized governance structures tend to perform efficiently, leading to better population health outcomes. Successful health systems use governance structures that assist in three key functions: priority setting, performance monitoring and accountability.</li><li>• The aim of this research brief is to provide recommendations on how Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) can incorporate the three key functions of successful health systems within their governance structure.</li></ul> |
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**Background:**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Governance can be defined as a set of formal and informal rules that help model and steer health systems. It provides a framework for strategic planning and decision making, and thus plays a crucial role in meeting goals. [1] [2]</li><li>• The province of Ontario is undergoing a large health systems transformation with the introduction of OHTs - a group of providers and organizations accountable for delivering care in a more integrated manner, by providing a coordinated continuum of care for a designated population within respective geographic regions. [3]</li></ul> |
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**Current Status:**

- Currently, OHT's are free to determine a governance model/structure that works best for their specific needs, as long as it enables integration of services and focuses on the target patient population. [4]
- There are a few key criteria set out by the Ministry of Health (MOH) for OHTs governance model:
  - o Achieves the "Quadruple Aim" [4]
  - o Involves patients, physicians and clinical leaders in the governance model; and [4]
  - o The model enables the addition of other providers [4]
- Literature on governance across successful health systems suggests three key functions that play an important role: priority setting, performance monitoring and accountability. [2] OHT governance models can benefit from implementing these functions within their models.

**Evidence:**

### Three key functions of successful health system governance structures

- Priority Setting
  - In health care, priority setting can be defined as “the task of determining the priority to be assigned to a service, a service development or an individual patient at a given point in time. Prioritization is needed because claims (whether needs or demands) on healthcare resources are greater than the resources available.” [5]
  - Decision makers struggle to set priorities, particularly because they lack consensus about which values should guide their decisions. [6]
  - Examples of optimizing resources within priority setting include improving population health, providing safe and quality health care services, equitable treatment and outcomes, and efficient use of resources. [2]
- Performance Monitoring
  - Defined as the “systematic collection, analysis, and dissemination of data to inform stakeholders of the actions and outcomes associated with practitioners, organizations, and entire health systems”. [2]
  - Performance monitoring provides transparency and accountability, allowing stakeholders to make decisions that steer the health system towards better health outcomes.
  - Performance monitoring is also strongly aligned with the first function, priority setting, as performance metrics need to monitor indicators from the priorities set across the health system. This requires national/regional authors to articulate common goals across their institutions. [2]
- Accountability
  - Though definitions can vary, accountability in health systems is based on three elements: a clear definition of desirable goals or objectives, the ability to measure and monitor goal achievement, and a set of consequences for providers or organizations if achievements regarding goals or objectives are not satisfactory. [7]
  - Four main accountability mechanisms were identified in the literature to ensure healthcare providers are actively reviewing their performance and implementing solutions to problems: market-based accountability, electoral accountability, direct incentives, and professional regulation. [2]
  - Literature also suggests that enforcing a combination of the four accountability mechanisms, rather than a singular mechanism, is more likely to encourage health providers to maintain/increase performance standards. [2]

Options:

### Three key functions and OHTs

- Priority setting in OHTs
  - A major guiding framework for the OHTs is the “Quadruple Aim”, an internationally recognized framework which designs and delivers effective health care systems. [8] Much of the OHTs priorities and goals are thus set through the lens of achieving the “Quadruple Aim”, as well as aims of greater integration of services. [8]
  - **The recommendation for OHTs is to first set overarching priorities in conjunction with the MOH based on the “Quadruple Aim” that can be adopted across the province, and then for each OHT to convert these high-level priorities into targets/actions individualized to their specific populations and needs.**
- Performance Monitoring in OHTs
  - The current performance monitoring model employed by the OHTs is the OHT Performance Measurement Framework. [9] Through this, OHTs leverage patient and provider-reported data to better understand health outcomes and identify opportunities for improvement. [9]
  - **As a recommendation, OHTs should align the Performance Measurement Framework to priorities set based on achieving the “Quadruple Aim” and collect performance indicators that help reach these priorities.**
- Accountability in OHTs
  - Currently, accountability mechanisms in OHTs are loosely defined, and only a single mechanism of accountability is utilized to meet performance standards. [10]
  - **In order to increase accountability in the OHT’s and improve performance, it is thus recommended to utilize a combination of mechanisms of accountability: market-based accountability, electoral accountability, direct incentives, and professional regulation.**

### Conclusions:

- This research brief provided recommendations on how OHTs can incorporate the three key functions of successful health systems within their governance structure.

### Submitted by:

Mausam Vadakkayil (mvadakka@uwo.ca)

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