

January/February 2004

IN THIS ISSUE

- **Note from the Chair**
- **Partners' Meeting**
- **Trinidad and Tobago Update**
- **WCWL Publication Update**
- **Upcoming Meetings**
- **WCWL Website**

NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

Looking Back and Looking Forward

For me, the January Partner's meeting, and the many other meetings and discussions held at that time, re-emphasizes the importance of a participatory, multifaceted approach to improving the management of waiting times in Canada. Work on our three fronts is progressing, yet never as fast as we might wish it. This challenges Provinces, which need to move forward on their plans around improving waiting times, and would benefit from the product of our completed work.

In preparation for, and pursuant to the January meeting, we have attempted to very carefully align our resources, time, and talents to see us successfully through to December 2004. Beyond this, as we learned from WCWL_1: Do not start too late to retain momentum, resources, and forward motion. To that end, the views derived from input on strategic directions received at our meeting will be aligned to opportunities for partnership and support. Together, these will form the basis for a prospectus for WCWL_3. I anticipate this being a highly iterative process. This will need to be in an advanced form by this summer.

To Partner representatives, please accept my thanks for the contributions you make on behalf of your organization and also for the broader commitment to moving collectively on improving access to scheduled services.

*Dr. Tom Noseworthy
WCWL, Steering Committee Chair*

PARTNERS' MEETING

The WCWL Partners' meeting was held on January 5 and 6, 2004 at the Delta Calgary Airport Hotel. Twenty organizations are presently represented by the Partners group. The meeting was an opportunity for the Partners to be brought up to date with the current work in the various projects, as well as solidify plans for the remainder of 2004. In addition, a significant portion of the meeting was devoted to identifying the priorities, as seen by the Partners, for the work of WCWL_3.

Updates were presented to the Partners from: 1) the Waiting Time Project - Dr. Claudia Sanmartin, lead researcher 2) the Primary Care Project - Dr. Carolyn De Coster, lead researcher and 3) the Implementation and Evaluation Component - Dr. Barbara Conner-Spady, lead researcher.

Over the remainder of 2004, the Waiting Time Project will complete the development of maximum acceptable waiting times for hip and knee replacement. In addition to delivering these benchmark waiting times, this project will establish a solid methodology which may then be applied to numerous other procedures.

The main objective of the Primary Care Project over the next nine months will be to modify the original hip and knee replacement tool to be used by general practitioners. This will allow referrals to orthopedic surgeons to occur in a more systematic and consistent manner.

For both the Waiting Time Project and the Primary Care Project, the possibility of beginning work on a second tool, within the scope of WCWL_2, is presently being explored.

Before the end of the calendar year, the Implementation and Evaluation Component of WCWL's work will involve completing a report detailing the stages of implementation and evaluation reached by the various regions utilizing WCWL's priority criteria scores.

The meeting also provided an opportunity for each representative to give a brief update on the developments and initiatives in their respective regions. As expected the rate of implementation and evaluation varies greatly. Nonetheless, it was informative and motivating to hear of the strategies, progress and challenges within the various regions and provinces.

The latter half of the Partners' meeting allowed the representatives to look forward, past December 2004, and create a "wish list" of endeavors for WCWL_3. The suggested ideas varied, originating from different perspectives. A prioritization exercise illuminated three particular areas the Partners would like to focus on during WCWL_3. These were: 1) develop benchmark waiting times for the remaining tools 2) conduct an evaluation/outcomes analysis and 3) develop a universal surgery tool.

Overall the Partners' meeting was informative and insightful. The two days of meetings were very valuable and will provide guidance for the remainder of this year, as well as for the future work of WCWL_3. It is anticipated the Partners will be assembled for a final WCWL_2 meeting late in 2004.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Quality is About Change

Trinidad and Tobago has experienced growing concern about diminished access to care, most often expressed in the form of increased numbers of patients, or unacceptable lengths of time, on waiting lists.

Similar to other governments with significant public investment in the delivery of health care, there are major challenges in understanding the nature and extent of waiting list problems and in devising workable solutions. These challenges are complicated by the absence of standardized data available for compiling national information on waiting lists and more importantly, providing the public with a greater sense of confidence about access to, and quality of care.

To this end, the Health Sector Quality Council, Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization and Health Canada undertook a review of the Western Canada Waiting List Project (WCWL). In late September a six-member Trinidad team spent one week conferring with WCWL Partners in Edmonton, Calgary, Regina, and Winnipeg.

In its report, the team recommended a phased approach to the implementation of a surgical waiting list management system. The first phase would consist of stakeholder sensitization, establishing policy direction, needs assessment, systems redesign, and the development of a communication plan and an implementation plan.

The second phase would consist of continued stakeholder sensitization and project-piloting. Surgeons and staff would use tools to score patients, but will not use the scores to prioritize patients. This would allow time for staff and surgeons to become familiar with using the tools. Data collection, processing, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting would be ongoing.

Phase three would include the full implementation of the system. Surgeons would use the tool to score patients on a waiting list for surgery, and patients would be slated and prioritized accordingly to priority score. Public sensitization and reporting would be ongoing.

To introduce phase one, a national workshop was held in Port of Spain on December 5 where representatives of providers, hospitals, and government had the opportunity to examine the factors affecting waiting time in Trinidad and Tobago, to discuss the WCWL approach, and to arrive at a consensus on common approaches to improving the situation. Introductory remarks from the Minister of Health set the tone of the workshop: *Quality is about change. It is about innovation and transformation-- if we are to achieve quality it starts with each of us. As your Minister I urge you to let your deliberations be meaningful and productive*

so that the results would redound to the benefit of the people who we have pledged to serve.

The process of reform is underway and updates will be provided here from time to time.

WCWL PUBLICATION UPDATE

The following article has been accepted for publication:
Prioritization of Patients on Waiting Lists for Hip and Knee Replacement: Validation of a Priority Criteria Tool
(International Journal of Technology Assessment in Health Care)

Since the last edition of our newsletter, another of our articles has been published; a copy is included with the newsletter.

Prioritization of Patients on Scheduled Waiting Lists: Validation of a Scoring System for Hip and Knee Arthroplasty. Barbara Conner-Spady, Gordon Arnett, John McGurran, Tom Noseworthy, and the Steering Committee of the Western Canada Waiting List Project. Canadian Journal of Surgery. 47(1). 2004. 39-46.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

March 2004 - WCWL Steering Committee teleconference

March 4, 2004 – Advisory Committee on Health Delivery and Human Resources, Toronto, ON

March 31-April 1, 2004 – CMA Colloquium on Wait Time Measurement, Monitoring and Management, Ottawa, ON

May 26-28, 2004 - Canadian Association for Health Services and Policy Research Conference, Montreal, PQ

WCWL WEBSITE

This issue of the Update will be available on the website, www.wcwl.org, on February 13, 2004. The next issue will have a change in distribution from a mass mailing to an email notice informing recipients of the newsletter's posting on our website. A list of recipients who will continue to receive the newsletter in the postal system will still exist. If you wish to be added to this list, please send this request by email to Ann Marie McInnis at ammcinni@ucalgary.ca.

UPDATE

THE UPDATE is the monthly newsletter of the Western Canada Waiting List Project. It is published at the Department of Community Health Sciences, University of Calgary, 3330 Hospital Drive NW, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 4N1. For more information, please contact John McGurran, Project Director, at 403-210-3813 info@wcwl.org or visit our website at <http://www.wcwl.org>

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