

Aug/Sep/Oct 2000

IN THIS ISSUE

- What's New?
- WCWL Implementation Panel
- WCWL Media Release
- Upcoming Events

What's New? What's Next?

Here is a brief synopsis of WCWL activity since the June/July issue of the UPDATE appeared.

- Following a highly successful meeting of the Partners in July, staff began to develop protocols for the additional pilot testing, reliability, and usability research.
- The Steering Committee held a teleconference on September 7; the next scheduled meeting is on October 25.
- Additional pilot-testing of the general surgery, hip and knee replacement, and MRI prioritization tools is under way in their host sites. Proposals for similar work on the cataract surgery and children's mental health tools are being prepared.
- The WCWL Implementation Panel (formerly known as the Clinical Synthesis Panel) held its inaugural meeting in Calgary on September 18.
- An Interim Progress Report was presented to the Health Transition Fund and was disseminated in mid-October.

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"Three considerations, important in the representation of results, which are commonly confused are resolution, accuracy and precision. These concepts are primarily concerned with data, especially numerical data, but they apply also, in an analogous sense, to ideas."

Edmund Murphy, *The Logic of Medicine*, 1976

WCWL Implementation Panel

The group originally conceived of as the WCWL Clinical Synthesis Panel met for the first time in Calgary on September 18. In the course of discussion, it became clear that the name "Implementation Panel" was more apropos this group's terms of reference. Assessing the preparedness of the health authorities was seen as a high priority. The terms of reference can be summarized as:

To provide advice to the WCWL Steering Committee on the usability, uptake, and implementation of the priority tools in Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) and to provide support to the Partner RHAs in this regard.

The panel's key activity will be the completion of an "environmental scan" wherein interviews will be conducted with RHA administrative and medical staff. This will be completed early in 2001 and recommendations based on this aspect of the work will be included in the final report.

Panel membership consists of:

- representation from the WCWL Steering Committee:
 - Dr. Tom Noseworthy, Chair
 - Dr. Morris Barer, Vice-Chair
- representation from the five WCWL Clinical Panels:
 - Dr. Derryck Smith, Children's Mental Health
 - Dr. Rob Sevick, MRI Scanning
 - Dr. Mark Taylor, General Surgery
 - Dr. Gord Arnett, Hip and Knee Replacement
 - Dr. Suren Sanmugasunderam, Cataract Surgery
- representation from the seven RHAs:
 - Dr. Brian Postl, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
 - Dr. Barry Maber, Saskatoon District Health
 - Ms. Dawn Davis, Regina Health District
 - Dr. Robert Bear, Capital Health Authority
 - Dr. Brian Stewart, Calgary Regional Health Authority
 - Dr. David Ostrow, Vancouver/Richmond Health Board
 - Dr. Glenn Lowther, Capital Health Region

WCWL Media Release

An interim progress report was submitted to the Health Transition Fund in mid-September and was circulated to the Partners and to the individuals on our mailing list on October 18. The full text of that report, as well as the following media release, is available on our website, at <http://www.wcwl.org>.

EDMONTON – October 18, 2000 – The Western Canada Waiting List (WCWL) Project today released an interim report describing progress to date on the development of criteria (tools) for prioritizing patients awaiting specified elective clinical and diagnostic procedures.

The proposed criteria outlined in the interim report are intended to help distinguish, in an efficient and straightforward manner, the priority of patients for each of the five procedures: cataract surgery, children's mental health services, general surgery, hip and knee replacement, and MRI scanning. By developing criteria and making them available, the Project hopes to influence the way waiting lists are structured, evaluated, managed, and perceived by the public, providers, and regional health authorities in Western Canada.

"This interim report is a key step towards finalizing criteria for prioritizing patients awaiting five significant clinical and diagnostic procedures," said Dr. Tom Noseworthy, Chair of the WCWL Project Steering Committee and Chair of the Department of Public Health Sciences at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. "The draft tools included in the interim report will continue to be refined this winter for our final report expected to be completed in Spring 2001," he continued.

The criteria for each procedure were identified by clinical panels and were subjected to pilot testing in clinical practice. The pilot testing helped determine the extent to which the criteria were relevant to assessing patients' relative urgency, whether any important factors were omitted, and whether the criteria were clearly described and unambiguous.

"The Project is an unprecedented partnership of Canadian governments, medical associations, regional health authorities, and research communities striving to create tools that will improve the timeliness and equity for elective patients needing health care," he added.

Current WCWL Project activity includes refining the prioritization tools, developing a standard definition of waiting time, looking into methods for establishing acceptable waiting times for elective procedures, and organizing a forum on priority setting across differing treatment types and services.

The WCWL Project was created in 1998 in response to a major study sponsored by Health Canada that concluded: there is little or no standardization of waiting list data; regional health authorities and hospitals acknowledge they lack comprehensive information on the status of waiting lists; and there is widespread interest in standardizing and coordinating waiting lists for selected interventions.

The Western Canada Waiting List Project is a consortium of four medical associations, seven regional health authorities, the four western provincial ministries of health, and four health research centres. Funding for the Project is provided from Health Canada's Health Transition Fund.

Current versions of the priority criteria for each procedure can be found on the WCWL website under "Priority Forms" at <http://www.wcwl.org>.

Upcoming Events

- October 18 — WCWL Interim Progress Report media release
- October 25 — WCWL Steering Committee meeting
- November 22 — Third International Conference on Priorities in Health Care, Amsterdam Meeting, location TBA

UPDATE

WESTERN CANADA WAITING LIST PROJECT

THE UPDATE is the monthly newsletter of the Western Canada Waiting List Project. It is published at the Department of Public Health Sciences, 13-103 Clinical Sciences Building, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2G3. For more information, please contact John McGurran, Project Director, at 780-492-2647 or john.mcgurran@ualberta.ca visit our website at <http://www.wcwl.org>

Funding for the Western Canada Waiting List Project is provided by Health Canada under the Health Transition Fund