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What's New?

- The WCWL Partners will meet in Calgary on March 15 and 16, 2001 to discuss the results of our work and our final report. Mr. Ian Shugart, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Policy & Communications Branch, Health Canada, will speak after dinner on Thursday, March 15.
- Public opinion focus groups were held in Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg. Their purpose was to obtain a sample of the general level of the public's acceptance of the WCWL point-count approach to urgency rating, and of the five tools specifically. Findings of these sessions will be outlined in the final report.
- A significant part of our dissemination activities consists of publication in peer-review journals. Complementing the background paper published in CMAJ last October, a second article, "Setting priorities on waiting lists: point-count systems as linear models," has been prepared. In draft stage are five panel-specific papers which we hope to complete by the end of March. Publishable versions of the WCWL discussion papers are in the works as well.
- The Environmental Scan of the WCWL Partner regional health authorities (RHAs) has been completed. The purpose of this exercise was to obtain a sense of the views of RHA management on the potential for uptake and use of the tools. Interviews with RHA executives and clinicians were conducted, and the results will be discussed at the Partners' meeting and in the final report.

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Note from WCWL Chair

We are on schedule to complete our planned work of the WCWL Project on March 31, 2001. Not surprisingly, these last several weeks have been hectic. We have completed the second phase of reliability testing; the environmental scan to evaluate regional health authority perspectives on the tools and critical success factors for implementation; and public focus groups to receive feedback on our approach and progress to date. We are also completing the three white papers on waiting time definitions; waiting times and WCWL tools; and, prioritization across case types. This phase of WCWL will culminate with the Partners' meeting in Calgary, March 15 and 16. Thereafter, we are in "dissemination mode" and planning for WCWL 2, until the completion of current commitments on September 30, 2001.

I am excited about potentially retaining this partnership to study and better understand important and present-day issues in health care. There are many opportunities extending from our present work and we hope to make further contributions to waiting times, the quality of the tools, and our understanding of how and when best to use them. Continued thanks for your interest and contributions. Such a model of cooperation is the way of the future for action research committed to making a difference.

Tom Noseworthy
Chair, Steering Committee
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Upcoming Events

Mar 12 — Steering Committee teleconference
Mar 15 — Steering Committee meeting, Calgary
Mar 15 & 16 — WCWL Partners' meeting, Calgary
Mar 31 — WCWL Final Report submission to HTF
May 27-28 — HTF Dissemination workshop, Vancouver

Upcoming Partners' Meeting

Just over two years after the first Steering Committee teleconference to discuss the research agenda, the WCWL Partners will meet in Calgary on March 15 and 16 to discuss the findings and recommendations stemming from the program of research.

We will begin the two-day event with a reception on Thursday, March 15. That will be followed by dinner, a speech by Mr. Ian Shugart, and a panel presentation. Invited to participate in the panel are key members of the four WCWL Partner groups, each representing their unique point of view on the problems of waiting times and prospects for use of the WCWL tools. Bringing to the panel the view of a regional health authority is Mr. Phil Hassen, CEO of the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board. Ms. Glenda Yeates, Deputy Minister of Health in Saskatchewan, will provide the perspective of a provincial ministry of health. The outlook from a research perspective will be presented by Dr. Charlyn Black, Senior Advisor to the President and CEO of the Canadian Institute for Health Information. The fourth panel member is Dr. Robert Hollinshead, President Elect of the Alberta Medical Association. In the role of moderator is Dr. Tom Noseworthy, Chair, WCWL Steering Committee.

On Friday morning, the Partners' meeting will begin with introductory remarks by Dr. Tom Noseworthy, followed by presentations by Ms. Nancy Swainson, A/Executive Director, Health Transition Fund Secretariat, and by Dr. Frank Markel, Co-Principal Investigator, Ontario Waiting List Project. The meeting will then progress through the principal outcomes.

Current versions of the WCWL tools will be the next point of focus for the meeting. A presentation by Dr. David Hadorn, Dr. Barbara Spady, and Ms. Elaine Dunn will outline their state of development.

Views from the WCWL regional health authority Partners as elicited in the recently completed Environmental Scan will be described by Mr. Don Schurman and Ms. Helen Roman-Smith.

A summary of findings from the seven public opinion focus groups held in February will be presented by Ms. Erin Roulston of Ipsos-Reid.

The final summary presentation prior to discussion of the conclusions and recommendations to be included in the final report will be made by Dr.

Claudia Sanmartin and Mr. Steven Lewis. Claudia will offer a summary of the arguments in the two discussion papers she prepared: "Toward standard definitions of waiting times for health care services" and "Establishing acceptable waiting times for medical services: a review of the evidence and proposed methods." Steven will present his paper "The logical and ethical imperative of cross-procedural waiting list prioritization."

The final item will be the discussion of the final report and the next steps to be taken. We plan to wrap up at 3:30 p.m.

Priority Setting Conference

Following the successful 3rd International Conference on Priority Setting in Healthcare (Amsterdam, November 2001), the location of the next conference was announced: Oslo. Norway has offered a fertile ground for debate on priority setting during the last 10 years. More work is in progress, especially in the wake of the second Lønning report.

Among the topics for this meeting are the following:

1. Documentation of successes and failures in priority setting; an analysis of factors involved
2. National approaches to priority setting; macro and micro problems faced by nations trying to reallocate their health resources after a major political change
3. Diseases have their own hierarchy with respect to prestige in the eyes of doctors and patients—what problems does that create for priority setting? and
4. Resource allocation in Western industrialized countries: advice from another world.

For additional information, contact the Conference Secretary-General Ole Frithjof Norheim, Norway, at ole.norheim@isf.uib.no.

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>

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