Streamlining patient flow from primary to specialty care: a critical requirement for improved access to specialty care

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Policy document

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CMA POLICY

STREAMLINING PATIENT FLOW FROM PRIMARY TO SPECIALTY CARE: A CRITICAL REQUIREMENT FOR IMPROVED ACCESS TO SPECIALTY CARE

Policy Statement

Many provinces believe that increasing access to services and improving outcomes depends on improving the flow of patients from primary care to specialists. This is reflected in the position of a number of provincial and territorial governments on the need for improved access to primary care, particularly for patients with chronic conditions. The same is true for the specialty care system, which must be efficient and effective to provide timely access to care for patients. This policy provides a framework for improving access to specialty care, including strategies to enhance the efficiency of the system and ensure the best care for patients.

The policy is based on the following principles:
1. Patient-centred care: Patients should be at the centre of care, with their needs and preferences guiding decisions about care and treatment.
2. Access to care: Patients should have timely access to care, including appointments with specialists.
3. Continuity of care: Patients should maintain a relationship with a primary care provider, who can coordinate care with specialists.
4. Quality of care: Care should be safe, effective, and evidence-based.

The policy also includes the following recommendations:
1. Improve communication and collaboration between primary care providers and specialists.
2. Implement electronic health records to improve information sharing and coordination of care.
3. Develop and implement a strategy to increase the number of specialists.
4. Enhance the training of primary care providers to prepare them for the increasing demands of specialty care.
5. Invest in research to identify and address the challenges facing the specialty care system.

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